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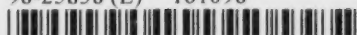
Fifty-third session

Item 108 of the provisional agenda*

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees:
questions relating to refugees and displaced persons and humanitarian
questions**Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa****Report of the Secretary-General****Contents**

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1-5	2
II. Action taken to implement General Assembly resolution 52/101	6-70	2
A. Overview	6-21	2
B. Regional overviews	22-54	4
C. Inter-agency cooperation	56-61	9
D. Cooperation with subregional organizations	62-70	10
III. Conclusion	71-73	11

* A/53/150.



I. Introduction

1. On 12 December 1997, the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/101, in which it noted that despite all the efforts made so far, the situation of refugees and displaced persons in Africa remains precarious.

2. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other concerned entities were called upon to intensify protection activities through appropriate capacity-building activities and technical assistance. Governments, the United Nations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the international community were encouraged to create conditions that would facilitate the voluntary return as well as the early rehabilitation and reintegration of refugees.

3. The international community was requested to respond positively to the third-country resettlement requests of African refugees in the spirit of solidarity and burden-sharing, and to continue to fund the general refugee programmes of the Office of the High Commissioner, taking into account the need to rehabilitate the environment and infrastructure in areas affected by refugees in countries of asylum. The special needs of refugee women and children were also emphasized.

4. Governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the international community as a whole were called upon to strengthen the emergency response capacity of the United Nations system on the basis of the experience of the emergency in the Great Lakes region. The need to increase the capacity for coordination and delivery of humanitarian emergency assistance and disaster relief in general on the part of States and others concerned was also stressed.

5. The High Commissioner was requested to submit a comprehensive and consolidated report on the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. Accordingly, the present report takes into account the efforts expended by the United Nations as well as by countries of asylum. The High Commissioner for Refugees also gave an oral report on the same subject to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1998.

II. Action taken to implement General Assembly resolution 52/101

A. Overview

6. As of the beginning of 1998, UNHCR estimates that Africa hosted 3,481,700 refugees, some 1,694,000 internally displaced and other persons of concern, as well as 2,149,700 returnees in the early stages of reintegration.

7. In addition to assistance and protection activities implemented by UNHCR and other organizations in 1997, the World Food Programme (WFP) recorded a total of 4.2 million refugees and returnees and 14.9 million internally displaced persons throughout the world. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, WFP spent US\$ 334.5 million in 1997 on displaced persons and refugee operations, delivering more than 645,000 tons of food. As of mid-1998, WFP had protracted relief operations in Angola, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, Uganda and Zambia. Further assistance is being provided to refugees, returnees and displaced persons through emergency operations in Ethiopia, Uganda and in the Great Lakes region.

8. In her report on Africa issued in early 1998, the High Commissioner deplored that in 1996 alone, 14 of the 53 countries of Africa were affected by armed conflicts, accounting for more than half of all war-related deaths worldwide and resulting in more than 8 million refugees, returnees and displaced persons. She stressed that the consequences of those conflicts have seriously undermined Africa's efforts to ensure long-term stability, prosperity and peace for its peoples.

9. As a result of the High Commissioner's recommendations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as well as WFP, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children, UNICEF and UNHCR are preparing recommendations on additional concrete steps that could be taken to ensure that all refugees and internally displaced persons are adequately protected and provided for, in accordance with internationally recognized rules and procedures. Furthermore, a plan of action is being drawn up to ensure that for their own security and the security of the States from which they fled, refugees be settled at a reasonable distance from the border in camps of limited size, in accordance with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Refugee Convention.

10. There have been positive developments in West Africa, particularly with respect to Liberia, Mali and the Niger. Indeed, the final implementation of the Abuja Peace Accord in Liberia led to elections in July 1997, disarmament and the establishment of state institutions, thus creating conditions for the promotion of repatriation and the return of internally displaced persons to their homes. Although funding constraints constitute a major handicap, efforts are being made to sustain the process and bring it to a conclusion by mid-1999. A further positive development is the successful completion of the repatriation of refugees, mainly of Tuareg origin, to Mali and the Niger.

11. Sierra Leone has constituted a major concern for the West African subregion, with more than 200,000 refugees, mainly women and children, having sought asylum in Liberia and Guinea since March 1998. The atrocities suffered by civilian populations at the hands of the Revolutionary United Front (Sierra Leone)/Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (RUF/AFRC) rebels cannot be overemphasized. In a joint statement issued in Rome in June 1998, the Executive Director of UNICEF, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children and armed conflict, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator supported the creation of an International Criminal Court, and appealed that perpetrators of such crimes as those committed in Sierra Leone be prosecuted.

12. In the context of the crisis in Guinea-Bissau, agencies of the United Nations made joint efforts to assess and monitor the situation, as well as to programme joint activities. Coordination and operational mechanisms have been set up at Dakar, where UNHCR and WFP work effectively together. The two agencies, jointly with OCHA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have agreed on the need for immediate assistance to internally displaced persons in order to prevent an outflow of refugees, the working number of beneficiaries and the distribution of tasks and responsibilities, as well as contingency plans in the eventuality of refugee influx to Senegal and to Guinea. This joint programming exercise is reflected in a joint appeal to donors issued by OCHA.

13. Despite the preoccupying situation in some countries of the Horn of Africa, progress was achieved in repatriation to regions enjoying sustainable peace. The repatriation of Somali refugees from the refugee camps in Ethiopia to the north-western part of their country has been very successful,

since its resumption in December 1997. Following an agreement reached by all parties concerned, the mass organized voluntary repatriation of Ethiopian refugees from the Sudan was completed in May 1998. The Eritrean Government has given its consent to begin preparatory activities for the resumption of the repatriation of Eritrean refugees in the Sudan after the rainy season in September 1998.

14. Against this background, the United Nations and the international community have worked decisively towards phasing out assistance to protracted refugee caseloads by actively promoting voluntary repatriation where the initial reason for the flight no longer exists. In a concerted effort, relevant agencies will also pursue vigorously the reintegration processes they initiated in the countries of origin. The post-conflict reintegration and reconstruction challenges in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali and the Niger offer the opportunity to ensure an effective interface among humanitarian, development and sustainable peace initiatives.

15. Training workshops continued to be held to ensure more gender-sensitive and gender-responsive programme planning. In order to promote durable solutions, active support is being given to refugee and displaced women's local initiatives in peace-building activities, such as peace-education and conflict-resolution. The participation of refugee women in camp management committees, as well as food management and distribution, is being enhanced. Priority will also be given to the protection of and assistance for unaccompanied minors, and to the issue of child soldiers.

16. A review of UNHCR assistance to older refugees was carried out in the fall of 1997. The evaluation team travelled extensively to field locations, and case studies were prepared on a number of countries, including the Sudan. The resulting report describes lessons learned and offers recommendations on policy options to address the specific problems of elderly refugees. The main findings of the Sudan case study relate to the phenomenon of negative social selection observed in refugee camps. Many older refugees have become poorer as a result of the loss from departure or death of younger wage earners. The report offered a number of country-specific recommendations, such as the creation of community services structures in the camps to monitor the condition of the elderly, enhancing monitoring procedures and tools, and ensuring that all elderly are receiving supplementary feeding.

17. In an effort to intensify protection activities and promote a dialogue with the High Commissioner's Executive Committee members, UNHCR senior staff have visited a number of African capitals and met with some permanent

missions at Geneva. The need for Members of the Executive Committee to lead by example in the area of refugee protection, even in the face of strong domestic political pressures, was the main conclusion of these consultations. It was also recognized that positive State practice is, in many respects, a *sine qua non* for consistent international backing for refugee protection, while for its part UNHCR would make renewed efforts to meet its statutory responsibilities. This dialogue will be continued both with concerned States and with a range of non-State actors, including regional organizations, United Nations bodies and agencies, the international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations partners, advocacy groups and possibly even the private sector.

18. African refugees accounted for more than one third of the total number of those resettled under the auspices of UNHCR since January 1998 and almost half of the active cases pending decisions by resettlement countries or slated for submission (or resubmission). Several resettlement countries have announced increases in current or future allocations for resettlement of African refugees. The profile of the refugees identified as being in need of resettlement is changing. During the course of 1997, 78 per cent of the refugees resettled from Africa were Somali refugees in Kenya. By the end of the year, the active caseload for UNHCR included refugees of 26 nationalities in 28 countries of asylum, and Somali refugees represented only a quarter of the active caseload; another quarter were Sudanese. This diversification is an important achievement. It is a result of a more proactive use of resettlement to address the particular needs of individuals and groups in accordance with UNHCR criteria. However, the breadth of locations and the diversity of refugee populations pose different challenges for processing and reception. In this light, a regional resettlement meeting of UNHCR staff and officials of resettlement countries was organized at Addis Ababa in April 1998. An effort was made during the regional meeting to place resettlement on the policy agenda, and to identify concrete steps to implement resettlement more effectively, consistently and transparently.

19. In an effort to raise environmental awareness and promote environmental activities, UNHCR has supported workshops in the Sudan and Rwanda, and another will be held soon at Kigoma, United Republic of Tanzania. The first regional environmental training workshop being organized for Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, the Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti will be held at Addis Ababa in October 1998.

20. An inter-agency project entitled "Towards sustainable environmental management practices in refugee-affected areas" is nearing its end. Its main objective is to develop

training materials for the refugee-assisted community and to produce practical guidelines to decision makers, UNHCR field staff and partner agencies in order to harmonize environmental operations in the field. The agencies involved include WFP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), as well as some non-governmental organizations.

21. Since 1997, UNHCR has been part of the GLOBE programme, which is an inter-agency programme of the United States Government designed to encourage refugee children to protect their local environments. Based on the success of this programme in the United Republic of Tanzania, Kenya and Benin in 1997, UNHCR is planning to include Senegal in the programme in 1998.

B. Regional overviews

1. The Great Lakes region of Africa

22. Following the mass repatriation of refugees from former Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and the United Republic of Tanzania at the end of 1996 and early 1997, the United Nations was (and remains) confronted by the challenges of reintegrating the great majority of them as returnees in Rwanda as well as in Burundi, along with ensuring protection and finding solutions for the remaining tens of thousands who have so far chosen not to repatriate. The some 260,000 Burundi refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania constitute the region's largest single refugee group. The largest repatriation operation in the region involves some 70,000 refugees of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who are in the process of returning from the United Republic of Tanzania. UNHCR delivered care and maintenance assistance to these groups of refugees and returnees, collaborating extensively with WFP (for food assistance) and UNICEF (for programmes focusing on children and unaccompanied minors) in the process.

23. The challenges facing the United Nations agencies, in particular UNHCR, in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa included the tasks of ensuring protection for the refugees remaining outside their countries, reintegrating those who have returned home and rehabilitating areas affected by the presence of refugees.

24. Although the challenge of protection is a familiar theme for UNHCR worldwide, the flight of Rwandan refugees from their country in 1994 in the aftermath of genocide gave rise to protection and security problems of

exceptional gravity. The camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (former Zaire) and the United Republic of Tanzania harboured not only genuine refugees but also many of the perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide (including the remnants of the former Rwandan Government and armed forces), close to the borders of their country of origin. The inability or failure of the international community and host Governments, despite the High Commissioner's repeated calls for action, to effect the separation of criminals and armed elements from refugees, contributed to regional instability and to the outbreak of the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (former Zaire) in late 1996. It also led some military units to identify refugees with perpetrators of genocide and to treat them accordingly. In addition to the tragic consequences for tens of thousands of refugees, the failure to make a clear distinction between refugees and criminal elements continues to hinder the exercise of the international protection mandate of UNHCR in the region.

25. During her February 1998 mission to Africa, the High Commissioner emphasized that it was necessary and feasible to reconcile the protection of refugees with the interests of the countries concerned, including their national security. In her meetings with the leaders of the region, they discussed actions that could be taken to address these concerns, including measures to ensure the purely civilian character of refugee camps and to exclude persons who do not qualify for refugee status. The meeting also covered the need for UNHCR to have access to refugees and returnees, and for Governments to ensure the security of UNHCR and other humanitarian agency staff. These issues were addressed at a ministerial-level regional meeting on refugee issues in the Great Lakes held at Kampala in May 1998.

26. The reintegration of returnees presents a special challenge in the Great Lakes region of Africa, given the legacy of genocide in Rwanda and the persistence of conflict in Rwanda, Burundi and the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Successful reintegration requires not only material assistance but also measures to promote justice, and eventually the reconciliation of former refugees with the other members of their home communities. Indeed, material assistance, such as in the rehabilitation or construction of rural housing, health centres and education facilities, combined with support for the justice system and measures for the restoration of livelihoods, can play a vital role in reducing the possibilities for conflict among the members of different groups, and hence can foster reconciliation. Although it is recognized that reconciliation following the horrors of genocide is a time-consuming process, a resurgence of violence and further refugee flows

will be unavoidable unless members of the different groups can find ways to live side by side without fear. Reconciliation is a task that will require concerted and long-term support from the international community for initiatives that must come from the Governments and people of the countries themselves. Reintegration programmes of the United Nations agencies and their implementing partners are intended to contribute to this healing process.

27. The rehabilitation of areas affected by the presence of refugees is necessary to mitigate the social and environmental impact of refugees on the communities that host them, and to help redress the perceived disparities in the levels of international assistance provided to refugees as compared to the local population. In the Great Lakes region of Africa, UNHCR rehabilitation programmes in countries of asylum have also been of vital importance in maintaining access to refugees and in enabling UNHCR to perform its protection function.

28. Both reintegration and rehabilitation are tasks that require the participation of agencies of the United Nations and other humanitarian and development organizations, in close collaboration with Governments concerned. In the Great Lakes operation, UNHCR has primarily undertaken rehabilitation projects that could be implemented quickly and were designed to meet the most immediate needs of returnee or refugee-affected communities, needs that UNHCR staff, given their presence in the field and familiarity with local conditions, are well placed to evaluate and address. It is necessary to combine these immediate requirements with longer-term rehabilitation projects that converge with development objectives. In order to ensure that the various actors bring the necessary expertise to the rehabilitation process in a coordinated and consistent manner, UNHCR, in addition to participating in the normal inter-agency coordination mechanisms, established a partnership with UNDP in Rwanda, and more recently with WFP, to form a joint reintegration planning unit to plan and manage reintegration activities.

29. Under the current Great Lakes operation, WFP is supplying vital assistance to an average of 1.4 million beneficiaries per month in Rwanda, Burundi, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Congo.

30. In 1998, WFP plans to deliver about 256,570 metric tons of food to the victims of the Great Lakes regional crisis. About 36 per cent of the food will be used for care and maintenance of refugees, 28 per cent to assist displaced and local affected people, 27 per cent for rehabilitation activities, 6 per cent to support nutritional programmes and 3 per cent

for returnee/resettlement programmes. Average monthly food deliveries exceed 21,000 tons.

31. WFP, in collaboration with UNHCR, is providing food assistance to an average of 410,000 refugees located in the United Republic of Tanzania (344,000), Rwanda (29,000), Republic of Congo (8,000) and Uganda (29,000).

2. West Africa

Repatriation and reintegration of Malian refugees

32. The repatriation of Malian refugees was completed in May 1998. More than 130,000 refugees repatriated to Mali with the assistance of the international community. In northern Mali, WFP, in close cooperation with other agencies, has been assisting the return, resettlement and reintegration of refugees living in Algeria, Burkina Faso, the Niger and Mauritania since mid-1997. Returnees have been actively participating in resettlement and rehabilitation activities, together with local populations. In conjunction with a UNDP-funded project, WFP has also helped to reintegrate former rebels in society. This project has provided cash resources and food-for-work to build up new civilian economic activities in different sectors. Should resources be available and security permit, activities in northern Mali will continue until the end of 1998.

Repatriation and reintegration of refugees from the Niger

33. As of mid-1998, all 3,200 refugees from the Niger had returned from Algeria and Burkina Faso. Major efforts were made to prepare returnee sites prior to the return movement.

34. As is the case in Mali, the Niger programme has faced serious funding constraints and has been hampered by targeted acts of banditry. UNHCR scaled down its presence at the end of June 1998, when the return movement was completed, and is now monitoring a multi-year rehabilitation programme.

Liberian refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons

35. From the start of the promotion phase in December 1997 until July 1998, some 62,400 refugees had returned under the auspices of the international community. According to government authorities, a further 180,000 Liberian refugees returned spontaneously during the same period. In Liberia, UNICEF has been active in ensuring that special services for children and women were available in areas where both internally displaced persons and refugees

are returning to their communities of origin, while WFP continues to implement a programme that aims at the eventual repatriation and resettlement of 737,000 internally displaced persons in Liberia, and 548,000 returning from Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. In Liberian returnees' communities, WFP has been promoting a major operation to promote rehabilitation of the local infrastructure, based on extensive food-for-work activities. Simultaneously, targeted food aid, including school feeding, food-for-work, food-for-training and nutritional rehabilitation, is being distributed as reinstallation and resettlement takes place. UNHCR received earmarked funds in July 1998 to finance its participation in the joint UNHCR/UNICEF Liberia Children's Initiative for the reintegration of refugee and internally displaced Liberian children. Activities include teacher-training, school-focused income-generation, girls' education, environmental education, and tracing and integration assistance for unaccompanied children.

Sierra Leonean refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons

36. Following the military intervention launched by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)/Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) troops in February 1998, President Kabbah was reinstated on 10 March 1998. The security situation has since vastly improved in Freetown and some major cities in the interior of the country but as of mid-1998, remained very volatile in the eastern part of the country. Since early April 1998, international staff of United Nations agencies, including UNHCR, have returned to Freetown. In late March, President Kabbah formally launched the United Nations Flash Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance to Sierra Leone in the presence of United Nations agencies. The appeal sought \$11.2 million to meet immediate humanitarian needs in Sierra Leone, with a particular emphasis on refugees and internally displaced persons. In Sierra Leone and Guinea, UNICEF has been concentrating on providing urgent health assistance to newly internally displaced persons and refugees. Special assistance to victims of amputations in Sierra Leone is being provided by UNICEF in the form of medical supplies to International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) teams and hospitals. Additionally, household food security support is also extended to female-headed households, most of whom have been displaced by the conflict. WFP and its implementing partners have resumed emergency food aid distribution to more than 500,000 internally displaced persons and the growing number of refugees in Liberia and Guinea, currently estimated at 300,000.

37. In April 1998, the High Commissioner's Special Representative in Liberia invited the Liberian Minister of Defence to take action with regard to violent harassment of civilians (mainly returning refugees) by law enforcement officers in various parts of the country, particularly in areas close to the border with Sierra Leone. A technical cooperation programme is being designed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in order to strengthen the judicial system and provide advisory services to Sierra Leone. OHCHR is planning to send human rights observers to Sierra Leone to monitor the ongoing trials of military personnel and civilians allegedly involved in human rights violations.

38. Should the security situation improve inside Sierra Leone, the large-scale return of refugees could be promoted. Until such time, the return of urban refugees from Conakry and some other cities in the subregion to Freetown is being facilitated. As of mid-1998, some 6,500 Sierra Leonean refugees have been assisted to repatriate under this scheme.

Bissau Guinean refugees and internally displaced persons

39. Since the beginning of the conflict in June 1998 in Guinea-Bissau, most of the 300,000 inhabitants of the capital city, Bissau, have fled to the countryside, where confrontations between mutineers and supporters of the President have been less frequent. Appeals have been launched by various parties, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to leaders in the region, warning that the conflict could result in a humanitarian crisis. Although as of mid-1998 a relatively small number of Guinea-Bissau's one million inhabitants had crossed into neighbouring countries, the risk of a refugee outflow has been constantly increasing since hundreds of thousands of displaced persons are without adequate food, drinking water and medical care. Humanitarian agencies have pressed to deliver aid inside Guinea-Bissau. The first convoys arrived by road from Senegal in the eastern towns of Bafata and Gabu on 16 July 1998. It should be noted that since the beginning of the conflict the international community has had no access to some 5,000 Senegalese refugees who had been living in the north region of the country before the crisis.

Somali refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons

40. The organized repatriation of Somali refugees from camps in Ethiopia to north-western Somalia, which started in February 1997, is continuing. As of July 1998, over

28,000 refugees have returned to their country of origin under UNHCR auspices. In 1998, 60,000 refugees are expected to repatriate from Ethiopia to north-western Somalia.

41. In addition to returns from Ethiopia, some 500 refugees repatriated from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, 400 from Yemen, 300 from Kenya and 100 from Djibouti. In March, over 700 refugees were repatriated through an airlift operation from the Dadaab camp in Kenya to Bossaso in north-east Somalia. In order to maintain the momentum created following the new approach to programming and fund-raising adopted by the United Nations collectively, another United Nations consolidated appeal for Somalia was issued on 31 March 1998.

42. In other parts of Somalia, the first phase of the emergency response to the catastrophic flooding that occurred in the low lands, in which UNICEF played an important role, ended in late 1997, but an emergency situation still remains, requiring continued relief supplies and services in health, nutrition, water and sanitation, education and child protection.

Repatriation and reintegration of Ethiopian refugees

43. The mass organized voluntary repatriation of Ethiopian refugees from the Sudan, which commenced in 1993, was concluded in May 1998. A total of 72,327 Ethiopians were assisted with organized transportation from their places of abode in the Sudan to the reception centres in Ethiopia and onwards to their individual places of origin. They were also provided with reintegration packages, including a cash grant and WFP food package for nine months.

44. The remaining caseload of Ethiopian refugees in Kenya, estimated at 5,000 refugees, will be repatriated during the latter part of 1998. The completion of this movement will mark the end of organized mass repatriation of Ethiopian refugees from the countries of asylum.

Assistance to Sudanese refugees and internally displaced persons

45. Besides UNHCR protection and assistance activities in Uganda, key UNICEF response to the northern and western parts of the country included support to the delivery of emergency medical services and supplies; the construction of temporary schools for displaced children; emergency water and sanitation activities; advocacy to stop the abduction of children and ensure their return; and psychosocial programmes for affected children.

46. Inside the Sudan, UNICEF complemented traditional emergency relief with actions to promote respect for humanitarian principles through Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS). With an estimated 1.2 million people needing urgent assistance in the face of famine and starvation, particularly in the Bahr el Ghazal region, UNICEF, WFP and other partners continue to try and reach vulnerable groups by road, air and barge with essential services, including food, vaccinations, basic education, tools and seeds, supplementary feeding, water/sanitation and protection and care of children with special needs. The need for food aid has greatly increased due to escalating insecurity and drought, which occurred during the cultivation period in 1997. WFP's emergency operation to refugees, war-affected and internally displaced persons, which falls under the umbrella of OLS is expected to reach about 2.6 million needy people.

3. Southern Africa

Repatriation of Angolan refugees

47. In spite of the dedicated and able efforts of the High Commissioner's Special Representative to Angola, progress towards implementation of the Lusaka Protocol has proven to be a painstaking and frustrating process. However, during the tenure of Maitre Alioune Blondin Beye, positive developments included normalization of state administration in 272 of the total 335 localities, and formal recognition of UNITA as a political party by the Government of Unity and National Reconstruction. In addition, many UNITA senior officials took positions in the new Government. UNITA officials were appointed as Governors in some provinces and radio VORGAN ceased its propaganda broadcasts.

48. The implementation of the Lusaka Peace Accord has been unfortunately impeded by the failure of UNITA to fulfil its obligations. Armed attacks, mainly by UNITA, in most of the provinces, including Zaire Uige and Moxico, have led to an overall deterioration of the security situation in Angola. A number of ambushes and mine incidents occurred in which several hundred Angolan national police and army personnel were killed. UNITA has been reluctant to hand over four strategic locations, namely Andulo, Bailundo, Mungo and N'Harea. UNITA has also recently recaptured municipalities in Moxico Province, eastern Angola, through armed attacks. In addition, there was extensive looting of offices and assets, all of which compelled UNHCR to relocate staff from some of the more dangerous locations in northern and eastern Angola. In view of these security constraints, UNHCR had no choice but to declare a temporary suspension of the

repatriation and reintegration programmes with effect from the end of June 1998.

49. Angolan refugees continued to return spontaneously, and between 1995 and mid-1998 a total of 143,577 Angolan refugees had returned to their home country. The total number of returnees includes 14,283 Angolans who returned between January and May 1998. Based on the initial improved political climate and coupled with the completion of key rehabilitation activities and planned organized transport for a limited number of vulnerable refugees, UNHCR had envisaged that most of the 160,000 Angolan refugees would have opted to return spontaneously in 1998. The current situation, however, is dramatically different: returnee movements have come to a complete halt, and well over 20,000 Angolan refugees have actually left the country, going to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the wake of mounting insecurity. In addition, some 90,000 internally displaced persons have fled their villages of origin and are flocking to safe havens. In the light of this new situation, UNHCR's original planning assumptions for 1998-1999 are under complete review.

50. Notwithstanding the security and financial constraints that resulted in the delay in the repatriation, UNHCR made a tangible and visible impact in the returnee villages by rehabilitating social infrastructure. This included the repair of access roads, food delivery and other relief items to returnees, and most importantly, the rehabilitation and staffing of medical facilities, schools and water supply systems. Following the takeover by UNITA of many returnee areas that were formerly under state administration, most of these facilities seem to have been looted. A formal complaint was lodged against UNITA in the Joint Commission to compensate for the damage and destruction that appears to have occurred. These recent events, coupled with the arrival of many thousands of new Angolan refugees in neighbouring countries over the past few weeks, cast a doubt over the possible early repatriation of Angolans from asylum countries.

Internally displaced persons

51. After nearly 30 years of conflict, Angola is a country where displacement has become the norm, with up to one million persons internally displaced at any given time. As prospects for peace improved in late 1997 and early 1998, over 120,000 internally displaced persons were resettled to their communities of origin. UNICEF's field presence in seven provinces facilitated the provision of resettlement and relief kits to some 15,000 resettled families in close collaboration with non-governmental organizations, WFP

and government counterparts. Some 20,000 families who remained in camps for internally displaced persons received UNICEF assistance targeted to women and children, including basic health services, emergency education assistance and support to psycho-social services for traumatized children, and mine awareness. Unfortunately, by June 1998 increased military activity in certain provinces sparked new displacements.

52. Following the deterioration in the security situation in some provinces of the country, the human rights officers deployed in Malanje, Cuanza Norte, Moxico, Luanda Sul, Bengo, Huila and Uige have been recently dealing with cases of internally displaced persons. In cooperation with representatives of the Government, UNHCR, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations Office for Humanitarian Assistance Coordination, the human rights officers have been visiting camps of internally displaced persons. The people interviewed reportedly left their homes following attacks on areas where the central authority had recently been restored (Uige, Bengo, Cuanza Norte, Moxico) or for fear of possible attacks, especially after the departure of the local authorities (Luanda Sul, Huila, Malanje).

Durable solutions for urban refugees in southern Africa

53. With political stability prevailing in southern Africa, there are no major refugee problems in the subregion (with the exception of Angolan refugees). UNHCR is, therefore, assisting relatively few urban refugees. They originate mainly from Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, and local integration is being sought for them. These refugees are not likely to repatriate or resettle in the near future. Most Governments accept local integration for those refugees who have attained economic self-reliance and who are able to sustain themselves without external support. Therefore, UNHCR has been supporting vocational training and business loans or micro-credits for the urban refugees. It is intended that this will lead to income-generation activities, with subsequent increased levels of self-reliance.

Rural refugees

54. It has to be acknowledged that some of the Governments' policies have been less conducive to the implementation of income-generating activities. For instance, in certain countries refugees are accommodated in remote camps in sparsely populated areas. In such cases, income-generating activities may not be sustainable due to lack of market for products. In other countries, the limited

movement of refugees inhibits certain types of income-generating activities. There have also been problems in connection with repayment of loans and identifying appropriate implementing partners that can manage revolving funds. Despite these constraints, some income-generating activities in the southern Africa subregion, namely tailoring, poultry-raising, commercial baking, restaurant management and carpentry, have been successful and have enabled refugees to attain a reasonable level of self-reliance.

55. UNHCR's main challenge is to ensure that refugees are allowed to work and enjoy free movement so that they can engage in productive and profitable activities. UNHCR will also look for competent implementing partners in order to manage revolving funds.

C. Inter-agency cooperation

56. Since the revised version of their memorandum of understanding came into effect on 31 March 1997, WFP and UNHCR have been involved in a number of joint initiatives to improve cooperation. A workshop was held at Abidjan in March 1998, following a first similar initiative at Kampala in December 1997, with a view to giving WFP country directors and UNHCR field representatives an opportunity to discuss their experiences in implementing the memorandum, to review problems where relevant and to help clarify clauses in the memorandum.

57. Bilateral agreements have been signed with the World Bank and UNHCR to collaborate with and complement each other in rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration efforts in the countries that are emerging from post-conflict situations. Similarly, significant progress has been made to initiate cooperation with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UNDP and FAO.

58. Initial steps have also been taken towards formulating a joint collaborative project/programme between the World Bank/UNDP/UNHCR to be implemented in Uganda – a self-reliance programme aimed at benefiting some 170,000 Sudanese refugees in settlements provided by the Government. With the collaboration of IFAD and the World Bank in countries and areas that are emerging from a post-conflict situation, UNHCR has initiated rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration activities. Among these, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, north-western Somalia and Rwanda are the front runners. The participation of the African Development Bank and other bilateral and multilateral agencies, such as the European Union, is also being sought to take over the developmental activities

required to accelerate the process of reintegration of displaced populations in their home areas. In addition, UNHCR has been increasingly involved in the design of strategies for refugees' and returnees' self-reliance. Self-reliance is part of an effort within UNHCR to find more cost-effective and durable solutions for refugees and returnees. Moreover, attaining partial or even full self-reliance is a way for refugees to increase their self-esteem and in general to strengthen community links and structures. Self-reliance options include direct job placement, job-oriented vocational training and micro-finance.

59. The 1996 memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and UNICEF gives primary responsibility for the welfare of refugee children to UNHCR, while UNICEF takes the lead role for children in their country of origin. Over the last few years, UNHCR, UNICEF, and such organizations as ICRC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Save the Children Alliance have established a close working relationship to protect and assist unaccompanied minors. Throughout 1997, UNICEF, UNHCR, ICRC and others participated in a collaborative inter-agency effort to trace unaccompanied children and reunite them with their families, focusing principally on finding the families of more than 26,000 children identified as unaccompanied after the mass return of Rwandans from former Zaire in late 1996. By April 1998, more than 18,000 of these children had been reunited with their families, while roughly 6,000 remain in 48 institutions across the country of origin awaiting reunions. While tracing continues, UNICEF, UNHCR and non-governmental organization partners have continued to provide basic support (shelter, food, water, medical care) with ongoing tracing, reunion and fostering activities.

60. In November 1997, Save the Children called an inter-agency meeting on family tracing and reunification at Nairobi. Participants included UNHCR, UNICEF, ICRC and involved non-governmental organizations. The meeting produced an inter-agency action plan addressing issues of prevention of separation, inter-agency collaboration, and fostering reunification and reintegration. A follow-up meeting was held at Geneva in June 1998.

61. UNHCR received funds in July 1998 earmarked to finance its participation in the joint UNHCR/UNICEF Liberia Children's Initiative for the reintegration of refugee and internally displaced children.

D. Cooperation with subregional organizations

1. Organization of African Unity

62. UNHCR continued to participate actively in the meetings of the OAU Commission on Refugees, and extended assistance and support to the Commission during its visits to refugee camps and settlements in Africa. As requested through a resolution adopted by the 1997 OAU Council of Ministers and Heads of State and Government summit sessions at Harare, UNHCR collaborated and will continue to cooperate with OAU in the preparations for the OAU Commission on Refugees' ministerial meeting on refugees and displaced persons in Africa, scheduled to be held in Khartoum in December 1998.

63. During the period under review, UNHCR and OAU engaged in a process of joint and bilateral consultations with the Governments concerned in the Great Lakes region to find durable solutions to the refugee problems there. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the OAU Secretary-General co-chaired a regional meeting on refugee issues in the Great Lakes at Kampala in May 1998. The meeting entrusted OAU and UNHCR with follow-up on the recommendations, including cooperating with broader regional and international forums and institutions. The results of the regional meeting could provide important input to the OAU ministerial meeting on refugees in December 1998.

64. In April 1998, UNHCR intensified its support to OAU in the area of early warning and conflict prevention. Building upon previous missions and consultations between OAU and UNHCR in this area, an experienced UNHCR staff member was seconded to assist OAU Conflict Division in developing a set of parameters for providing a description of potential or actual conflict situations. UNHCR will continue to collaborate with OAU to facilitate a structured and systematic approach to streamlining information-gathering and reporting and analysing conflicts.

65. As a follow-up to previous meetings on peace-building held at Kampala, Johannesburg and Kigali, UNHCR, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), OAU and United Nations agencies organized a regional workshop on best practices of women in peace-building and conflict-resolution in November 1997. This complementary and mutually reinforcing activity on women in peace-making and peace-building could provide useful input to the OAU/ECA African Women's Committee on Peace and Development, set up in April 1998.

2. Economic Community of West African States

66. In addition to regular contacts with ECOWAS officials concerning the situation in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau, UNHCR participated in a regional forum on the role of ECOWAS in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in West Africa. Other joint initiatives will be proposed in the context of the Liberian repatriation operation and the Sierra Leonean emergency.

3. Intergovernmental Authority on Development

67. On the basis of the memorandum of understanding signed on 19 June 1997 between the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and UNHCR, which defined areas and modalities of cooperation, a number of joint actions were taken. These included planning of a workshop on emergency preparedness which will be organized with the IGAD secretariat.

4. Southern African Development Community

68. The idea to promote subregional cooperation on refugee-related issues through the framework offered by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) stems from a series of developments that have taken place in the last few years in southern Africa and that have profoundly changed the refugee situation in the subregion. UNHCR has seized the opportunity offered by the democratization process to raise awareness on human rights and refugee issues and influence government policies accordingly. To this end, in July 1996 UNHCR and SADC signed a memorandum of understanding providing a broad framework for cooperation between the two organizations.

69. The memorandum provides for cooperation between UNHCR and SADC in various areas related to refugees and migratory movements, including accession to international refugee instruments, enactment/amendment of national legislation and strengthening of regional emergency preparedness mechanisms. UNHCR also will participate in preventive diplomacy directed at root causes of population displacements. These objectives will be achieved through a process of consultations with member States.

70. In January 1998, the SADC Council of Ministers, at its meeting at Maputo, discussed the refugee situation in the region, and noted the need for establishing a regional mechanism for safeguarding the human rights of refugees. The Council urged member States to adopt measures to harmonize and unify procedures and criteria for the protection and provision of social support to refugees. Following the approval of the SADC Council of Ministers to conduct consultations, working groups have been formed

representing Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These working groups will make proposals on how to address the refugee problems in the South African Development Community. The working group, UNHCR, the SADC secretariat and a consultant met in May and June 1998 to draft an initial declaration on refugees. In order to secure consensus from various Governments, working group members are currently visiting member States to discuss the contents of the draft declaration on refugees, which will be considered by SADC at its next meeting, scheduled for September 1998.

III. Conclusion

71. The situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa is among priority concerns of the United Nations. Coordinated efforts continue to address the complex problems faced by many countries on the African continent. Two areas, however, deserve further attention: the obligation of States to minimize the suffering of its civilian populations, and the need for clear and effective action by political leaders in the pursuit and consolidation of political solutions.

72. Firm support for the principles of refugee law by States and other actors is a prerequisite to the solution of the refugee problem, as well as the search for peace and stability in areas of conflict in Africa. Regrettably, in many instances it has proved difficult to implement the key provisions of international refugee law at crucial moments of crisis. To effectively address this problem in the future and drawing from the lessons learnt, as well as experience of the Great Lakes operation, especially between 1994 and 1996, a two-track approach is required, ensuring both the physical and legal separation of refugees from those found to be undeserving of that status. Those individuals who do not qualify for international protection under the United Nations and OAU refugee conventions, who are bearing arms and who are known to be responsible for acts of intimidation should not be accommodated in refugee camps. They should be disarmed by the host country. In situations where the national authorities lack the capacity to take such action, regional or international measures need to be considered.

73. In many instances in recent years, large-scale population displacements in Africa have been deliberately provoked or engineered by the parties to armed conflict themselves with the intention of furthering their political and/or military interests. Although it is acknowledged that the massive movement and presence of displaced

populations has impinged very directly on the national and security interests of States, it must also be emphasized that solutions to these situations lie in political dialogue and the efforts of leaders to promote political solutions.



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Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty

Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997–2006)

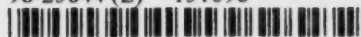
Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is a response to General Assembly resolution 52/193 of 18 December 1997 on the "First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty". The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-third session on progress made in the implementation of measures, themes, recommendations and activities related to the Decade, including recommendations for possible actions and initiatives for the rest of the Decade, as well as proposals for better coordination of actions taken by the United Nations system.

The report highlights the progress and setbacks experienced in poverty eradication and underscores the link between poverty, human rights and development. It also stresses the importance of global targets and international cooperation, as well as their implications for the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. Furthermore, the report reviews the activities of the United Nations system in support of national efforts.

* A/53/150.



Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1-2	3
II. An overview of progress and setbacks in poverty eradication	3-29	3
III. Poverty, human rights and development	30-39	6
IV. Global targets and international cooperation and their implications for the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty	40-63	7
A. Equity, poverty reduction and international cooperation	45-51	8
B. Partnership for integrated anti-poverty efforts	52-58	9
C. Coordination at the intergovernmental level	59-63	9
1. Commission for Social Development	59-60	9
2. Economic and Social Council	61-62	10
3. General Assembly	63	10
V. Activities of the United Nations system in support of national efforts	64-116	10
A. Administrative Committee on Coordination	64-66	10
B. United Nations Secretariat	67	11
C. Regional commissions	68-80	11
D. United Nations programmes, funds and specialized agencies	81-116	13

I. Introduction

1. Eradicating poverty is the primary challenge facing the international community at the eve of the twenty-first century. In its resolution 52/193 of 18 December 1997, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-third session on progress made in the implementation of measures, themes, recommendations and activities related to the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, including recommendations for possible actions and initiatives for the rest of the Decade, as well as proposals for better coordination of actions taken by the United Nations system.

2. The present report has been prepared in response to those requests. Section II consists of an overview of progress and setbacks in poverty eradication; section III covers the theme of the year "Poverty, human rights and development"; section IV covers global targets and international cooperation and their implications for the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty; section V covers the activities of the United Nations system related to the Decade. The present report should be read in conjunction with the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development (A/53/211) and on the role of microcredit in the eradication of poverty (A/53/223).

II. An overview of progress and setbacks in poverty eradication

3. Significant political, economic and social changes have overtaken the world in the 1990s and there has been renewed commitment to the eradication of poverty. Eliminating poverty was a cross-cutting theme of major conferences and summits and is a major challenge for the twenty-first century. Policies aiming at a more equitable distribution of income and wealth, more widely shared possibilities for influencing decisions, as well as increasing opportunities for the poor, are of utmost importance for the eradication of poverty.

4. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development¹ has reaffirmed that the most productive economic and social policies are those that enable people to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities. Social and economic development cannot be secured in a sustainable way without the full participation of women. Equality between women and men is a priority for the international community and must be at the centre of economic and social development.

5. Global living standards have risen dramatically over the past 25 years. Despite an increase in population from 2.9 billion people in 1970 to 5.8 billion in 1996, per capita income growth in developing countries has averaged 1.3 per cent a year, according to the World Bank's 1998 *World Development Indicators*. While hundreds of millions have had lifted from them the yoke of poverty and despair, millions more have been added to those living in abject poverty.

6. The global progress in poverty reduction conceals large regional differences. Until the financial crisis in East Asia, the proportion of people living in poverty was declining in Asia, where most of the poor live. More than 500 million people remain in poverty in South Asia. The number of poor is rising rapidly in Europe and Central Asia and continuing to rise in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa.

Education

7. The challenges of the coming century to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable development and lasting peace will fall on today's young people. Educating the young to meet these challenges has become a priority for every society. Investment in education, therefore, is fundamental for the process of enabling individuals and countries to realize their potential and make the most of their resources.

8. Education is often singled out as an important policy instrument in bringing about greater equality of opportunity. The most important asset of people living in poverty is their labour time. Opportunities for the productive utilization of this asset through employment are enhanced through education. Education raises the productivity of both employed workers and the self-employed. Hence, it can reduce inequalities by strengthening the opportunities for the poor to increase their income.

9. In many countries there is a growing realization that education is the key to the future and that the challenges and jobs of tomorrow will require an education of better quality than that which most students receive today. Perceptions of the scope of education also are changing as societies realize the importance of life-long learning, that education does not end with childhood and youth. In this context, the two main strands of global educational policies are the deepening commitment of most countries to the democratization of education (Education for All and Education Throughout Life) and the tendency towards a more productive view of educational quality and purposes. Some of the signs of how the productive view has permeated educational policies, compared to 30 years ago, are through assessment,

adjustment, effectiveness, performance, outcomes, fiscal constraints and of course human capital.

10. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) *World Education Report 1998: Teachers and Teaching in a Changing World*, the global patterns of student enrolments by region and level of education have changed considerably over the last 30 years and continue to evolve. In the developing regions, where population pressures are still strong and student enrolment growth rates generally have been positive, Education for All, including an improvement in the quality of basic education, has been the main focus of educational policies, at least to the extent that political and economic conditions have allowed. In sub-Saharan Africa, and the Arab States and southern Asia region, which include most of the least developed countries, educational policies have been very much hostage to economic and political circumstances.

11. In Latin America and the Caribbean, where the educational infrastructure is more highly developed than in other developing regions, the 1990s have witnessed several major initiatives towards the decentralization of once-monolithic State education system, e.g. Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico. In each case, this has entailed, among other things, complex and protracted discussions with teachers' unions, which traditionally had negotiated teachers' salaries and conditions of service at the national level and were still wary of further erosion of their incomes coming after the experiences of inflation and structural adjustment policies in the 1980s.

12. In spite of the progress in student enrolments in the developing world, an estimated 140 million school-age children, 60 per cent of them girls, do not go to school. Over 900 million adults, two thirds of whom are women, are illiterate.

Health

13. According to the *World Health Report 1998*, at least 120 countries (total population above 5 billion) currently have a life expectancy at birth of more than 60 years. The global average is 66 years compared to only 48 years in 1955; it is projected to reach 75 years in 2025. Based on the review by the World Health Organization (WHO) of overall health trends in the past 50 years, remarkable improvements in health have been due to socio-economic development, the wider provision of safe water, sanitation facilities and personal hygiene, and the establishment and expansion of national services.

14. Tragically, while average life expectancy has been increasing throughout the twentieth century, 3 out of 4 people in the least developed countries today die before the age of 50 – the global life expectancy figure of half a century ago. This year, 21 million deaths – 2 out of every 5 worldwide – will be among the under-50s, including 10 million small children who will never see their fifth birthday, although most children worldwide are now immunized against major childhood killers. Over 7 million deaths will be men and women in what should be some of the best and most productive years of their lives.

Safe water and sanitation

15. Water resources are essential for satisfying basic human needs, health and food production, energy, the restoration and maintenance of ecosystems, and for social and economic development in general. Agriculture accounts for a major part of global freshwater use.²

16. The lack of basic sanitation, water supply and food safety continues to contribute greatly to diarrhoeal disease mortality and morbidity in the developing world. In spite of efforts made during the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, about 20 per cent of the world population lacks access to safe water and about 50 per cent lacks access to adequate forms of sanitation. Current trends in the provision of services remain insufficient to achieve full service coverage in the near future. For sanitation, in particular, the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council meeting held in November 1997 in Manila concluded that at the present rates of progress, the world cannot achieve full service coverage by the year 2100. The problem of water supply and sanitation is particularly acute in dense urban areas, where construction has overtaken the rate at which the supply system and sanitation services can be installed economically and within the financial capacity of municipalities.

17. Rural communities are generally well dispersed within a watershed and have intimate links with small-scale catchments and aquifers, although there is evidence that those localized sources are becoming increasingly polluted from latrines and waste heaps. In many developing countries there is still a strong urban bias in access to potable water, adequate sanitation and health clinics.

18. It is important that considerations of equitable and responsible use of water become an integral part of formulating strategic approaches to integrated water management at all levels, in particular in addressing the problem of people living in poverty. The development, management, protection and use of water so as to contribute

to the eradication of poverty and the promotion of food security is an exceptionally important goal.

Impact of the international economic environment on poverty

19. Experiences of East Asian countries show the powerful synergy between economic growth and social sector investment, as well as the need to achieve balance between growth objectives and social development with respect to resource allocation. East Asia had achieved remarkable development progress from the 1960s to the mid-1990s. Absolute poverty, on the average, had been reduced from afflicting 60 per cent of the population in the sub-region to only 20 per cent (before the current economic crisis). The success in alleviating poverty had been largely due to the considerable attention paid to human resources development, in particular, education, by the Governments of East Asian countries.

20. According to the *World Economic and Social Survey, 1998* (E/1998/50), economic growth in developing countries is expected to decline in 1998, due primarily to direct and indirect consequences of the 1997–1998 Asian financial crisis. Contractionary adjustment policies, poor business confidence, shortage of domestic liquidity and scarcity of external finance underlie the economic contraction in the crisis countries in Asia. Reduced foreign direct investment flows from the affected Asian economies is expected to have a negative effect. Weaker international commodity prices, aggravated by significantly reduced demand from Asia and elsewhere, are anticipated to weaken economic growth in commodity exporting developing countries.

21. The recent East Asian financial crisis has slowed the pace of poverty reduction in the region. Although precise estimates are not available, tens of millions of people have been dragged back to poverty. For example, as many as 50 million Indonesians face a return to poverty as a result of the drought and financial crisis, according to a recent assessment of the World Bank. Consequently, rice and overall food prices rose by 50 per cent over a 12-month span, according to an April 1998 report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). As a result, Indonesia will have to import about 3.5 million tons of rice in 1998. Farmers, who represent more than half the workforce, are suffering severely. Furthermore, unemployment continues to rise in East Asia (up from 2 per cent to about 6.9 per cent in the Republic of Korea). Social strife is likely to intensify under pressure from growing poverty, with effects that could include a disruption of the economic distribution system, due to conflict in some urban

areas. Women are expected to experience a particularly heavy burden, with a significant increase in domestic violence and divorce as a result of joblessness and family dislocation.

22. Although most East Asian countries invested in education and health, social safety nets were not yet established to protect the unemployed. But under the current circumstances, many families are financially overburdened since the traditional breadwinners have been laid off. The majority of the "newly poor" are unskilled workers, who were temporarily employed during the economic boom but have now lost their livelihoods. Specific programmes to provide credit to those sectors most adversely affected, including agriculture, small and medium-sized enterprises and exporters, are of utmost importance in alleviating social distress and poverty in the region.

23. There is an urgent need for policies that will both inhibit the flow of volatile short-term capital and encourage long-term capital, especially foreign direct investment. Burden sharing by making borrowers and lenders pay the full costs of their risks, will strengthen the financial sector and will minimize the adverse effects.

24. Direct employment creation schemes, which include labour-intensive public works schemes and credit schemes to promote self-employment and enterprise development, will contribute to containing the social costs. Such schemes have been used in the past as part of poverty alleviation programmes, mainly in rural areas. Furthermore, the strengthening of social protection in the region is also an important long-term need.

25. Despite significant economic growth in some African countries, poverty remains pervasive, urban unemployment is high, underemployment is common and many subsist in low productivity, informal sector jobs in all countries. Africa and the least developed countries (LDCs) remain highly vulnerable to exogenous shocks, such as those related to weather or volatile international commodity prices.

26. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) *Least Developed Countries: 1997 Report*, development has proved elusive for a significant number of LDCs during the last 10 years. These countries have experienced a setback in development: their economies have declined, social conditions have worsened markedly, and they have become increasingly marginalized from the mainstream of the world economy. There are important differences between individual LDCs in terms of the nature of setbacks, its scale and its causes.

27. Poverty in LDCs is manifested in the deterioration of a range of economic and social indicators, including per capita output, food availability, access to education, health status and war-related mortality and displacement. Lack of adequate physical infrastructure and human resources development, declining commodity prices, adverse terms of trade and natural and man-made disasters contribute to negative economic growth for most LDCs. Many LDCs have become marginalized from the mainstream of the world economy, particularly from international trade and investment flows. Even inflows of international aid have fallen dramatically for some LDCs, because of the collapse of State structures through which aid can be disbursed and utilized. Poverty in the case of LDCs is best understood as a process in which the deterioration of State capacities, the weakening of civil society and economic decline interact to reinforce one another.

28. Equitable income growth is essential for reducing chronic food deficiency and poverty. As the majority of the poor are rural farmers, policies that promote agricultural and rural development will also enhance food security by raising incomes and reducing poverty. However, the most effective policy for increasing food security in certain LDCs is the promotion of peace.

29. Of particular concern to LDCs is the decline of official development assistance (ODA) and the prices of primary commodities on which they rely heavily. Furthermore, LDC's external debt burden continues to be a constraint on their capacity to accelerate development: it limits and dampens prospects for larger private capital inflows.

III. Poverty, human rights and development

30. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development reaffirmed the promotion of all human rights, including the right to development, as a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights, and seeks to ensure that they are respected, protected and observed. The special theme for 1998, "Poverty, human rights and development" was selected in recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides the occasion for taking stock and looking at the deficits that still exist.

31. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and

necessary social services, and the rights to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control", the violation of which generates poverty. Poverty and inequality are therefore violations of those human rights and others such as the right to participate, an effective legal system, freedom of expression and the principle of non-discrimination.

32. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, affirmed that extreme poverty and social exclusion constitute a violation of human dignity and that urgent steps are necessary to achieve better knowledge of extreme poverty and its causes, including those related to the problem of development, in order to promote the human rights of the poorest.³ To this end, it is essential for States to support participation by the poorest in the decision-making process of the community in which they live.

33. A human rights-based approach to poverty defines beneficiaries and the nature of their needs. It also recognizes beneficiaries as active subjects and claim holders and establishes duties or obligations for those against whom a claim can be brought to ensure that needs are met. The concept of claim holders and duty-bearers introduces an element of accountability. Increased accountability is pivotal to improved effectiveness and transparency.

34. Extreme poverty involves denial of a wide range of basic human rights and prevents full exercise of many others. Freedom and respect for economic, social and cultural rights go hand-in-hand. Poverty also prevents people from assuming not only their duties as individuals, but also their collective duties as citizen, parent, worker and elector.

35. The Vienna Declaration also reaffirmed the right to development as a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights. The Declaration on the Right to Development⁴ brings together the two covenants, through its elaboration of a holistic vision integrating civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, aiming at a constant improvement of the well-being of the human person. The individual's active, free and meaningful participation in development is the basis for the implementation of the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development.

36. With the globalization of the world economy, concerns are increasingly expressed about the negative impact on human rights of the world expansion of market rules and the social dimensions of the liberalization of trade. While the globalization of the world economy provides new opportunities for all countries, it also increases the risk of

marginalization of countries, groups and individuals that are not able to compete, and hence creates or aggravates poverty.

37. Issues at stake comprise the growing concentration of power in the hands of transnational economic and financial institutions, the liberalization of economic policies reducing the States' ability to manage growth and development, the privatization of social policy resulting in disenfranchisement for an increasingly larger number of people, deregulation at both the national and international levels, competitiveness, the complex challenges involved in interdependence and the risk of instability.

38. In its resolution 1998/25, adopted on 17 April 1998, the Commission on Human Rights decided on the appointment of an independent expert to address the question of human rights and extreme poverty. The independent expert will: (a) evaluate the relationship between the promotion and protection of human rights and extreme poverty, including through the assessment of measures taken at the national and international levels, taking into account in particular obstacles encountered and progress made by women living in extreme poverty; (b) make recommendations in the sphere of technical assistance and report on these activities to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fifth (1999) and fifty-sixth (2000) sessions, making those reports available to the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women; (c) contribute to the General Assembly's special session in the year 2000 on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development; and (d) make suggestions to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fifth session on the main points of a possible draft declaration on human rights and extreme poverty, for consideration by the Subcommission in 1999 and submission to the Commission, and for possible adoption by the General Assembly.

39. The basic link between democracy, development and human rights requires that all human rights be viewed as universal, indivisible and interdependent. The right to food, adequate housing, health, education, access to gainful employment, respect for international labour standards (including freedom of association and collective bargaining in the area of labour, freedom from discrimination in labour, elimination of forced labour and child labour) are all linked to poverty eradication.

IV. Global targets and international cooperation and their implications for the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty

40. Poverty eradication has remained a major concern in the work of the United Nations since the establishment of the Organization. The mandate of United Nations work against poverty is embedded in international agreements, declarations and covenants, dating back to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action provides the substantive framework for the current drive for eradicating poverty and for planning the efforts of the United Nations system in support of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

41. Recognizing the multidimensional characteristics of poverty, the international community has set for itself a range of interlocking development goals which, taken together, address the overarching challenge of poverty eradication. These goals include: achieving a substantial reduction of overall poverty and the eradication of extreme poverty by a date set by each country; reductions in infant and child mortality; reductions in maternal mortality and child malnutrition; improvements in life expectancy; and access to basic social services, especially among women. These goals provide a powerful set of objectives for all development partners to marshal resources and eradicate poverty.

42. A growing number of countries have formulated national strategies and action plans to fight poverty, in response to the World Summit for Social Development commitment to reduce overall poverty and eradicate absolute poverty through decisive national and international actions.

43. The United Nations reforms, announced in 1997 by the Secretary-General, provide a framework for collaborative action by the different organs and bodies of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, which can support and encourage country-by-country efforts geared towards the goals of accelerating poverty reduction and the eradication of the worst aspects of poverty during the next two decades. The executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, adopted a Statement of Commitment for Action to Eradicate Poverty, in May 1998. They stressed that the current global environment provides a real chance to qualitatively improve the conditions of life for the vast majority of the people who live in poverty, and

affirmed their collective commitment to the goal of eradicating poverty.

44. This collective commitment to eradicate poverty is not limited to governmental and intergovernmental institutions. Civil society all over the world is also determined to combat poverty and its root causes. A wide array of national and international organizations, including many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have put the fight against poverty at the centre of their own strategies and partnerships.

A. Equity, poverty reduction and international cooperation

45. There is a continued perception that globalization is a powerful force leading to new opportunities and challenges. For a large number of countries as well as people, it has brought definite benefits, but for others, it has brought further marginalization. Many argue that the inequity inherent in the current prevailing model of development has been the main cause of social, economic and cultural degradation experienced in many societies, and that it is the cause of the increasing vulnerability of many social groups.

46. Equity, in a broader sense, encompasses equality of opportunity and access, as well as the distribution of income, consumption and wealth. Improvements in health, education, nutrition, and the equity of land ownership can enable individuals to participate more fully and more productively in the economy.

47. Equitable access to the economic and social benefits of development in both developed and developing countries are key elements for eradicating poverty. International cooperation is key to ensuring that the benefits of globalization are shared equitably.

48. Promoting economic and financial stability depends crucially on political stability, but the same is true in reverse. Developing countries are particularly vulnerable to such instability, and it is important that there be a well-managed set of international mechanisms to support beneficial regulation and stability. The East Asian crisis has had devastating effects on the poor and vulnerable groups. The most seriously affected groups are the less educated, the unskilled, the migrant workers, women, and those who depended on government social programmes. The international community has an essential role in contributing to the financial stability of East Asian countries. Equitable

burden-sharing and reduced social costs are therefore of the utmost importance.

49. External debt burden continues to be a constraint to many developing countries, especially in Africa and the least developed countries. Debt servicing payments contribute to poverty when public revenue is diverted from productive sector expenditure, such as education, health and physical infrastructure to debt servicing. The most important recent development in debt relief for LDCs is the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) debt initiative. This initiative provides a framework for implementing a strategy of burden-sharing among all creditors to reduce HIPC debt to a sustainable level.

50. Linking global goals and targets to the issues of financing and assistance in achieving the commitments of the World Summit for Social Development and other conferences is of particular importance. Poor countries will need major external financing to alleviate poverty. Globally, ODA has fallen to just 0.25 per cent of gross domestic product in 1996 – the lowest level since foreign aid was institutionalized with the Marshall Plan about 50 years ago. So far, only Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have met or exceeded the 0.7 per cent target. It is noteworthy, though, that the United Kingdom and Ireland have begun increasing aid as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP). With declining ODA and the breakdown in some countries of national economies and social welfare systems, resource availability becomes more crucial for promoting development. The 20/20 Initiative mentioned at the Summit provides one innovative way of increasing resources for basic social services from ODA and national budgets of interested countries. It is imperative for the international community to find new and innovative ways of mobilizing resources for social and economic development.

51. The most important challenge facing the international community is to enable the poorest developing countries, especially those in Africa and the least developed countries, to develop capacities, integrate better into the global economy and thereby benefit from the opportunities offered by globalization. Debt relief, additional and well-targeted resources, access to markets, information and technology, as well as better trade opportunities are all crucial to poverty reduction and eradication.

B. Partnership for integrated anti-poverty efforts

52. Partnership may be established at different levels: local, national, regional, or international. In its resolution 1996/7, the Economic and Social Council reaffirmed the need to ensure an effective partnership and cooperation between Governments and the relevant actors of civil society, the social partners and the major groups as defined in Agenda 21, including NGOs and the private sector, in the implementation of and follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

53. It is of utmost importance to encourage the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate partnership for poverty eradication and development both at the national and international levels among Governments, the private sector and organizations of civil society. The idea of partnership is to unite efforts for social cohesion rather than shifting burdens.

54. The World Summit for Social Development recognized that poverty eradication requires the promotion of sustained economic growth, in the context of sustainable development, and social progress, requiring that growth be broadly based, offering equal opportunities to all people. Good governance, macroeconomic balances, opening spaces for individual, local and business initiatives and effective human development programmes are all key elements of a national poverty eradication strategy.

55. A proper balance between the State and the market is crucial for social progress and development. The State has a key role to play in supporting economic arrangements which encourage human development, stimulate enterprise and saving and create the environment necessary to mobilize domestic resources and to attract foreign investment. Sustainable development to eradicate poverty rests on economic growth that is not only stable and vigorous, but which also embraces people living in poverty and allows them to share the fruits of development. A dynamic private sector requires a government that fosters economic growth and is more responsive to the needs of people living in poverty. In order to benefit and promote the participation of people living in poverty, economic growth must incorporate a sound and open macroeconomic framework, in which resources are used productively and which facilitates the development of income- and employment-generating activities that include poor people, particularly women.

56. A strong and fruitful partnership between developed and developing countries is essential for the eradication of poverty. A vital step towards this end, is the economic well-

being and poverty reduction proposal of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Development Partnerships Strategy – with the specific goal that the proportion of people living in extreme poverty in developing countries should be reduced by at least one half by 2015. Progress reports for the DAC high-level meeting in Paris (8 and 9 April 1998) show that the hardest work for donors now will be in helping make it possible for developing-country partners to take full ownership and leadership of their development efforts, backed by better coordinated aid and other international support. OECD members are challenged to assure pro-development impacts from policies in areas such as aid-procurement liberalization, sustainable development and the mobilization of financing from all sources for development.

57. Development of indicators is also essential to monitor and assess progress achieved in eradicating poverty. Work by DAC, with experts from United Nations agencies, the World Bank and developing countries, has yielded substantial results in preparing for international consideration a manageable, working set of indicators of development progress, covering the goal of reducing extreme poverty and many of the main global goals agreed upon by the international community. At the same time, the United Nations system is promoting the synergies of this approach with its own Development Assistance Framework and the Minimum National Social Data Set.

58. With a political will, partnership and solidarity, poverty eradication is a reachable goal given the tremendous resources and wealth in the world.

C. Coordination at the intergovernmental level

1. Commission for Social Development

59. The Commission for Social Development considered “Productive employment and sustainable livelihoods” and “Promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons”, respectively, at its thirty-fifth⁵ and thirty-sixth sessions.⁶ Expansion of productive employment is an essential means to eradicate poverty, which is one of the major causes of social exclusion. Furthermore, social integration is best promoted in close harmony with efforts to expand productive employment and eradicate poverty, given their mutually reinforcing interrelationships. In this context, the Commission’s agreed conclusions stressed

actions and policies that could contribute to the expansion of productive employment, as well as the promotion of social integration at the national and international levels.

60. The Commission will be discussing in February 1999 the important issue, social services for all, and the impact of globalization on national revenue and the capacity to pay for social services. Its conclusions could be of paramount importance to the objective of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

2. Economic and Social Council

61. The Economic and Social Council, at its 1998 session on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, stressed that poverty eradication and improving living conditions of people everywhere should be the overriding objective of the Council's efforts to ensure an integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences, in particular the World Summit for Social Development. The coordination and management role of the Council, particularly with regard to its functional commissions and the executive boards of the funds and programmes; inter-agency coordination, national and regional level follow-up; and the vital importance of developing a coherent set of basic indicators to assess progress in social and economic development were the focus of the Council's coordination segment. The Council decided on the theme "Development of Africa: implementation and coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system of initiatives on African development" for its 1999 coordination segment. The Council also decided that the role of employment and work in poverty eradication would be the theme of the high-level segment of its 1999 substantive session.

62. At the high-level segment of the Council's substantive session of 1998, it was noted that trade liberalization and market access should be seen in the context of poverty eradication, the ultimate goal of development efforts. In this context, ensuring the provision of basic services, creating adequate infrastructure and investing in human development were all necessary prerequisites of a developing country's benefiting from any enhancement of global market access for its goods. It was noted that numerous tariff – and non-tariff – barriers remained, as well as tariff peaks and escalation, which affected developing countries' exports. It is, therefore, essential that the future multilateral trade agenda should aim at broad-based liberalization of trade.

3. General Assembly

63. By resolution 50/161, the General Assembly decided to hold a special session in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, and to consider further initiatives to achieve the commitments adopted at Copenhagen. At its organizational session held in May 1998, the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session held two panel discussions on the implementation of the outcome of the Summit. Among the issues addressed were the need to promote better integration of all aspects of development in the analysis and formulation of policies of poverty eradication, and the need to target the poorest of the poor and the "floating" populations such as the homeless, squatters, the rural indigent, urban slum dwellers and persons with disabilities. With regard to further initiatives to be considered by the special session, topics related to poverty reduction and eradication will inevitably be included, such as equity and distributional issues, which will be addressed in the *Report of the World Social Situation 2000*.

V. Activities of the United Nations system in support of national efforts

A. Administrative Committee on Coordination

64. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) has called upon organizations of the United Nations system to maintain sustained support to countries in translating the commitments made at conferences, including the World Summit for Social Development, into concrete national policies and programmes. In October 1997, ACC reaffirmed that the eradication of poverty remained a fundamental goal of the United Nations system that required its sustained and coordinated effort. At its first regular session of 1998, ACC also provided guidance for the inter-agency work to identify key areas, with a view to promoting collaboration and synergies among them at the country level. ACC stresses accelerating and sustaining economic growth that is equitable, employment-intensive and pro-poor. But action against poverty needs to go beyond economic factors. It requires special measures to increase the access of the poor to productive assets, including credit and land, and to make them also productive in the social and civil spheres.

65. ACC also stresses that empowerment, participation and strengthening of social capital are important means for

action against poverty, as well as ends in themselves. Strengthening and mobilizing social capital calls for policy and institutional changes that support empowerment of the poor and the full realization of their rights as citizens. It demands changes that promote the political, social and economic advancement of women, and of disadvantaged or marginalized groups. Special programmes may be required to address the needs of excluded groups, such as indigenous peoples, those living in remote areas and refugees. ACC also calls upon all countries to take these considerations and needs fully into account in their national development strategies, and expresses its determination to extend full support to such strategies, with a view to achieving development and peace by addressing the root causes of poverty.

66. The United Nations system assists countries, where requested, in the formulation of national plans and programmes for the eradication of poverty in line with government priorities and with the commitment to an integrated and coordinated follow-up to recent conferences, including the World Summit for Social Development. The resident coordinator system has been active in promoting a broad policy dialogue with Governments through a number of mechanisms linked with the programming of operational activities for development, notably inter-agency thematic groups.

B. United Nations Secretariat

67. Several departments of the United Nations support the work of the intergovernmental bodies in the area of poverty eradication, through the collection and dissemination of information, analytical and normative work, panel discussions and expert group meetings, and by encouraging the contribution of civil society. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs was designated by the General Assembly, in its resolution 48/183, as the preparatory body for the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996). The Department, in particular the Division for Social Policy and Development, acted as the focal point for the Year within the system, as well as for the preparations for the Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, proclaimed by the Assembly in its resolution 50/107. A report entitled "Observance of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996) and recommendations for the rest of the Decade" (A/52/573) was submitted to the Assembly at its fifty-second session.

C. Regional commissions

68. The regional commissions have a mandate from the General Assembly to follow up on conference goals. They provide, *inter alia*, advisory services and regional technical cooperation activities to assist Governments in developing a range of policies and programmes for poverty alleviation in various development sectors.

69. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has been involved for the last three years in initiating a process to examine the requirements of a broad-based development strategy that reduces poverty in the continent, and in implementing the elements of such a strategy. In this regard, ECA prepared a thematic programme with an elaborate agenda on the eradication of poverty in Africa, as a long-term objective of development. The elements of the programme, as they relate to the policy analysis dimension, include (a) capacity-building in the analysis of poverty, where several training modules on poverty and public policy were adapted to suit African conditions in collaboration with the World Bank; (b) activities related to the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa; (c) organizing a regional follow-up conference to the World Summit for Social Development; and (d) research and publications related to poverty.

70. ECA organized two training workshops on poverty and public policy, which were held respectively in Addis Ababa in June 1997 and in Johannesburg, South Africa, in February 1998, and were attended by more than 90 participants from 26 African countries. Participants were drawn from central and local governments, NGOs, academic and research institutions and the media.

71. Under the auspices of the United Nations System-wide Initiative, ECA, in collaboration with the World Bank and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), organized a high-level policy forum on "Cost-sharing in the social sectors" in June 1997, in Addis Ababa. The objective of the forum was to take stock of recent country experiences with cost-sharing in health care and education. The outcome of the forum provides, among others, one of the main background documents to be presented at the upcoming regional follow-up conference to the World Summit for Social Development. The proposed date for the regional follow-up to the Summit is early December 1998. It will be hosted by the Government of Kenya, and is designed to exploit maximum collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organization of African Unity

(OAU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank.

72. Moreover, ECA's work programme features a number of recurrent and non-recurrent publications dealing with issues of poverty. For example, in collaboration with UNICEF and OAU, a report on African children will be produced, starting in 1999. A status report on poverty in Africa is also planned in collaboration with the World Bank at a future date. Non-recurrent publications are planned to deal with issues relating to the "gender dimension of poverty" and the "ethnic dimension of poverty". Furthermore, future activities of ECA include a planned ad hoc expert group meeting on "Integrating quantitative and qualitative poverty data for policy analysis" to be held in October 1999 and a planned regional conference on "Anti-poverty policies and programmes in Africa" to be held in December 1999 in Addis Ababa. Collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Statistics Division of the Secretariat, the World Bank and other regional commissions is envisaged.

73. An important activity of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) related to poverty elimination is the Programme for the Development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in countries in transition. SMEs play a significant role in creating employment and can be regarded as a major vehicle for combating unemployment and poverty. Within the framework of this programme, ECE's activities include providing technical assistance in the development of national SMEs, development of legislation to promote entrepreneurship, providing statistical data, preparing discussion papers and information material, as well as organizing workshops on SMEs.

74. The Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development organized by the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) at Manila in November 1997 reviewed progress made towards poverty alleviation in the ESCAP region. The Ministerial Conference, *inter alia*, identified priority issues and related actions for strengthening national capacities for formulating and implementing effective policies and programmes for poverty alleviation in Asian and Pacific countries. ESCAP provides assistance in the formulation of policies and programmes to strengthen the role of the informal sector. A recent regional seminar examined the problems and constraints faced by the informal sector and made recommendations on policies and programmes for enhancing the productivity and income of informal sector workers.

75. The *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific, 1998* stressed the fundamental objective of long-

term development, namely, growth and equity, despite the current East Asia crisis. To that end, the *Survey* examines trends in the distribution of income and the incidence of poverty and offers a number of suggestions including enhancing agricultural productivity, human resources development, the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, education for women and child health care. ESCAP will also organize a regional workshop on poverty statistics in 1999, involving users and producers, in order to make further progress in developing standard approaches and methodologies for measuring poverty and for improving the availability of data.

76. ECLAC organized the first Regional Conference on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development in Sao Paulo, Brazil, from 6 to 9 April 1997. The ECLAC secretariat prepared a background document entitled "The Equity Gap: Latin America, the Caribbean and the Social Summit" (E/LC/G.1954 (CONF.86/3)), which analyses existing conditions of poverty, employment and social integration; reports on the developments that have proven most relevant to the aforementioned commitments; and proposes a few additional guidelines on the content and scope of policies designed to facilitate the full realization of those commitments.

77. ECLAC organized jointly with the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Chilean Ministry of Planning and Cooperation (MIDEPLAN) a workshop on "Social Institutional Framework for Overcoming Poverty and for Achieving Equity", in Santiago on 16 and 17 May 1997. ECLAC also continued with the publication of the *Social Panorama of Latin America* (1996 and 1997 editions), an annual assessment of the most relevant aspects of social evolution in the region, with particular emphasis on poverty, employment and income distribution.

78. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) commenced its work on poverty alleviation in 1995 and has progressed in three distinct but related phases: (a) measurement, characteristics and determinants of poverty; (b) policies to eradicate poverty; and (c) tools to eradicate poverty.

79. During the first phase, ESCWA undertook a number of technical studies on the concept, measurement and determinants of poverty in Western Asia. The research focused on an approach that poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that results from complex inter-linked determinants including social, economic and political conditions and the disabling environment. On a country level, ESCWA undertook poverty profiles for several countries and areas in the region including Iraq, the West

Bank and the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. After the completion of the country profiles and sectoral studies, emphasis shifted to the second phase, that is, the evaluation of policy measures adopted by ESCWA member States to combat poverty.

80. A meeting on improving standards of living in the Arab Mashreq countries was convened in Cairo during November 1997, to lay the ground for ESCWA's future work in formulating policies and strategies to eradicate poverty in the ESCWA region. During the current biennium, work is concentrating on policies required to alleviate poverty. The issues of poverty and youth and the role of income generating activities in eradicating poverty and improving the standards of living in local communities will also be investigated. The third phase (2000–2001 biennium) will be devoted to proposals of operational policies aimed at eradicating poverty in the region. Work will concentrate on three major tools for poverty eradication, namely social funds, micro-credit lending, and community development.

D. United Nations programmes, funds and specialized agencies

81. Poverty eradication has become a major cooperation focus of the programmes, funds and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, both at policy and operational levels. The combined effort, based on agreements reached at the World Summit for Social Development, is to assist Governments, particularly in developing countries, to develop policies and programmes to implement the conference outcomes, involving both the creation of an enabling environment and the provision of technical assistance.

United Nations Children's Fund

82. In developing countries, children are disproportionately represented among the poor. Globally, UNICEF estimates that children account for at least half of the poor, which implies that more than 700 million children in the developing countries live currently in conditions of extreme poverty (on less than \$1 a day). Moreover, their number has been rising by some 4 per cent per annum in recent years in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. It is estimated that, at present, a staggering 40 per cent of the children in low- and middle-income countries live in poverty. UNICEF acts to overcome the worst manifestations of poverty through its support to national Governments for providing all children with access to basic social services and ensuring that their rights are met. UNICEF's

programmes of cooperation are guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child⁷ and the specific goals and targets agreed to at the World Summit for Children. Within those frameworks, UNICEF undertakes actions in support of basic education, primary health care, nutrition, and low-cost water and sanitation. Actions are also targeted to reduce maternal mortality, child labour and sexual exploitation, which are all either a manifestation of or contribute to absolute poverty in developing countries.

83. Government expenditure on basic social services is a major instrument for the reduction of poverty. UNICEF promotes the 20/20 Initiative as a mechanism for mobilizing additional resources for children. Studies are being undertaken in several countries to determine the scope and extent to which budget and aid restructuring and efficiency gains can contribute to achieving universal access to basic social services in the shortest possible time span. UNICEF is working with UNDP, the World Bank and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to bring to the forefront the results of these studies and mobilize actions to meet the objectives of the 20/20 Initiative, and is working with co-sponsors (the Netherlands and Viet Nam) in preparing an international meeting in Hanoi in October 1998 on the implementation of the 20/20 Initiative.

United Nations Development Programme

84. As a follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, UNDP launched a multi-donor programme to assist programme countries in the formulation of national strategies and action plans to fight poverty. With funding of approximately \$20 million, this initiative is providing catalytic support to country anti-poverty efforts by: (a) raising public awareness of the extent, distribution and causes of poverty, and creating political space for a debate on national development priorities; (b) strengthening the capacity of government agencies and civil society to gather, analyse and monitor social indicators and to review public policies, budgets and programmes that impact on people's well-being; (c) defining national goals and targets for the reduction of overall poverty and the elimination of extreme poverty; (d) improving coordination among agencies dealing with social and economic policy; and (e) building a consensus among public, private and civil society actors on the most effective means to tackle poverty in their country. The Initiative was formally launched in late May 1996 and is now being offered in nearly 100 countries. UNDP is also supporting the implementation of the 20/20 Initiative in collaboration with other agencies in more than 20 countries.

85. The 1997 UNDP's *Human Development Report 1997* focused on poverty from a human development perspective and introduced a new indicator, the "human poverty index", which seeks to combine poverty as conventionally measured by income and other indicators of deprivation. Despite remarkable gains made in all regions in the past 50 years, more needs to be done, according to the report's authors, who offered a six-point plan for eradicating poverty in developing countries in one generation. UNDP is also producing a global report on poverty, which will review its experience in helping programme countries fight poverty.

United Nations International Drug control Programme

86. The activities of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) in the area of alternative development, i.e. the provision of alternative sources of livelihood for those currently dependent on income from the illicit cultivation of opium poppy or coca bush, are per se poverty alleviation measures. Illicit cultivation takes place in remote rural areas, with an income level substantially below the national average, which have attracted neither national nor international assistance. The populations in question are often marginalized and belong to the poorest of the poor. In these efforts UNDCP is strongly encouraging the support of other development agencies of the United Nations system in order to provide sustainable infrastructures and raise the general development level of the areas concerned. The necessity of a gender-sensitive approach in such endeavours is recognized, and UNDCP is currently developing guidelines on systematic gender mainstreaming.

United Nations Population Fund

87. In recognition of the multidimensionality of poverty, UNFPA actively promotes the widening of choices and opportunities in the various population and reproductive health programmes it supports. In this way it contributes towards the achievement of the broad development goals of the international conferences, particularly those contained in the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development.⁸ UNFPA is the main advocate for the goals of the Conference and encourages Governments to invest in human capital, since such investments have high rates of return and help to raise the productivity of the poor. UNFPA supports measures that help individuals meet their reproductive health needs, through the provision of universal access to a full range of safe and reliable family-planning methods and related reproductive health services and information.

88. UNFPA recognizes that poverty has a significant influence on, and is influenced by, demographic parameters, such as population growth. There are important linkages between population pressures, natural resources, food security, the environment, ill-health and poverty. UNFPA accords highest priority in its programmes and resource allocation to the poorest countries and segments of the population, and advocates priority attention and allocation of domestic resources for poverty alleviation. UNFPA fully subscribes to the 20/20 Initiative in its programming, urging Governments to designate 20 per cent of domestic allocation to basic social services, focused on the poorest.

89. In line with the Programme of Action, UNFPA recognizes that women and children bear a disproportionate burden of poverty and that eliminating discrimination against women and securing their empowerment are preconditions for poverty eradication. UNFPA actively promotes expanded access to basic education, especially for girls and disadvantaged sub-groups. Poverty tends to be associated with low access to information, services and community participation. Reaching the poorest and most disadvantaged groups requires political resolve, imaginative policies and innovative approaches, which UNFPA supports through advocacy efforts. Hence, UNFPA programmes target poor sub-groups, for example through campaigns to disseminate culturally sensitive information about the linkages between human sexuality, family planning and the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, the availability of reproductive health services, and details about how and where these can be obtained.

International Fund for Agricultural Development

90. Since its creation, the mandate of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has been directed at alleviating rural poverty and thus improving livelihoods on a sustainable basis. IFAD has played a unique role in the United Nations system, as a leading institution with financial assistance focused strictly on the rural poor—smallholder farmer, the landless and, in particular, rural women in low-income countries. Drawing on past experience, IFAD addresses poverty from the perspective that the key to viable poverty eradication lies with the poor themselves and their own underutilized talents and capacities.

91. IFAD's approaches include: (a) engaging in policy dialogue with member Governments in order to achieve a favourable macroeconomic and institutional environment which stimulates the rural poor to mobilize their productive

capacities and provide them with greater bargaining position vis-à-vis the market, the State and other civil society organizations; (b) targeting of assistance and recognizing that the poor are a heterogeneous group with different economic bases and different needs for enhancing production and income; (c) improving household income-generating opportunities by diversifying household income-generating activities and creating linkages between the agricultural economy, value-added activities such as small-scale agro-processing and markets outside the community; (d) strengthening the capacity of the poor to organize themselves; (e) promoting beneficiary participation; (f) encouraging private sector linkages; and (g) protecting the environment.

92. UNFPA has maintained a significant portfolio in the 1997–1998 period, which is fundamental to innovation in rural poverty alleviation in developing countries. In total, 196 projects were under implementation at the end of 1997, with a total loan amount of \$398 million for 29 projects approved in this same year. In 1998, 33 projects are expected to be approved for a total of \$426 million for an average loan size of \$13 million. UNFPA also will provide Technical Assistance Grants (TAGs) for an amount of \$32 million to support project development and design activities initiated by NGOs, and research as well as training at the start-up stages of projects.

93. Furthermore, with the aim of sharing lessons learned with the international development community, IFAD made available a PC-based Internet version of Evaluation Knowledge System (EKSYST) in 1997 – a unique database that enables project evaluation to be shared among strategic planners and project designers. This initiative is part of an experimental evaluation website, IFADEVAL, which provides 62 lessons learned from the various field projects, including credit and rural financial services, farm technology generation and institutional frameworks for project implementation.

World Food Programme

94. The development work carried out by the World Food Programme (WFP) is consistent with the assistance framework for poverty eradication elaborated in the World Summit for Social Development and other major United Nations conferences. The WFP addresses hunger, a key constraint to the eradication of poverty. Hunger denies its victims the use of opportunities to move out of poverty and traps them in a vicious cycle of hunger-poverty-hunger. The WFP helps people living in poverty to get out of the hunger trap and make lasting changes in their lives. For example,

in 1997, WFP reached 53 million people, handling 41 per cent of global food aid. Twenty-four million of these people benefited from projects aimed at helping the chronically poor achieve self-reliant growth. At present, WFP supports 151 development projects of this kind, representing a commitment of 1.8 billion dollars.

95. Proper targeting of development assistance is regarded as the key to the eradication of poverty. WFP aims at reaching the poorest people in the neediest countries. In 1997, WFP allocated over 90 per cent of its development assistance to low income food deficit countries (LIFDCs) and over 50 per cent of such assistance to LDCs. Furthermore, WFP helps build assets, and promotes self-reliance of people in poverty. In poor rural areas, WFP uses food-for-work projects, especially during periods when hunger is most prevalent – the agricultural lean season. Food-for-work projects assures short-term food security to the poor in ways that also create community assets that support self-reliant growth. These projects build rural roads and irrigation facilities, protect land from soil erosion and floods, develop markets, build public amenities, and enhance forest resources. An improved productive base gives the poor a better chance of escaping from poverty. On the other hand, improved nutrition gives them a chance to use the opportunities provided.

96. The empowerment of women is a critical factor in poverty eradication. In this regard, WFP targets 60 per cent of programme resources to women in regions where gender inequalities are most serious. WFP's supplementary feeding programmes target pregnant and lactating mothers, and infants and children. Often, they complement other programmes for nutritional monitoring, nutritional education, immunization and the promotion of proper health and nutrition practices. WFP works in partnership with civil society to better reach people living in poverty and promote a partnership with them in decisions that affect their lives. It has established links with over a thousand international and local NGOs to help improve the effectiveness of its food aid operation. These partners build local capacities, especially in community organizations, by emphasizing participatory development and the empowerment of people living in poverty.

United Nations Environment Programme

97. Environmental sustainability and resource use in developing countries are closely linked to social development, poverty reduction and management of demographic pressures. The role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in promoting poverty

reduction needs to be seen in the context of its primary functions of assessment and analysis of global and regional environmental trends; providing early warnings and coordinating emergency environmental assistance; developing international environmental law; fostering international environmental norms, policies, principles and agreements; promoting coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development in the United Nations system; advancing environmental awareness and cooperation; and providing policy and advisory services in key areas. UNEP's contribution to action for poverty eradication stems from its advancement of international environmental policy and cooperation in relation to sectors such as health, human settlements, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, industry, energy, transport and tourism, and from its promotion of global and regional environmental cooperation in regard to, for example, land, water, biodiversity, climate, hazardous wastes and chemicals. Its partnership with organization and programmes of the United Nations system facilitates such links. With the recent reform and refocusing of UNEP's work, its contribution to the United Nations system-wide work addressed to eradicating poverty should become stronger.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

98. In line with the activities of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty and the Plan of Action adopted by the World Food Summit, held in Rome in November 1996, FAO, through its normative and direct technical assistance to member countries, continues to support efforts to eradicate poverty and food insecurity. As the Secretariat of the Committee on World Food Security, FAO plays a key role in supporting the monitoring of the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action by member Governments and in stimulating action at national, regional and international levels to eradicate poverty and food insecurity. FAO plays a catalytic role in the United Nations system by developing a food insecurity and vulnerability information and mapping system (FIVIM) at national and international levels to identify the food insecure (their location and number, and the causes of their poverty and food insecurity). At national levels, FIVIM is expected to enable targeted action to enhance the productive and income-earning capacity of the poor, and to follow up the impact of such actions on the eradication of poverty, undernourishment and food insecurity. FAO is also undertaking policy studies on ways and means of increasing rural income through off-farm income to tackle poverty in developing countries. Other normative work for providing

policy advice to developing countries includes assessing cost-effective modalities of targeted food assistance for the poor and effective emergency prevention and disaster preparedness systems, with a view to ensuring optimal linkages between relief and development in situations where emergencies occur.

99. FAO is convinced that greater attention must be given by Governments, civil society and United Nations system organizations to strengthening the capacity of people living in poverty to help themselves. In its People's Participation Programme, FAO has successfully introduced more effective strategies for strengthening the collective self-help capacities of the rural poor. In this scope, specific policy-related rural poor household level research is now being conducted in Africa and Latin America, which aims at developing more appropriate rural poverty eradication strategies. At the field level, FAO's technical assistance is being provided to member countries to establish and/or strengthen national early warning and food security information systems, with a view to providing advance information on impending food emergencies and in the development of emergency prevention and disaster preparedness national programmes. Furthermore, through its Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Programme, FAO aims at empowering rural women through improved technical capacities for the betterment of their socio-economic conditions.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

100. UNESCO's strategy for the eradication of poverty is centred on human resources development and capacity-building and designed to empower specific disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, particularly women, youth, the marginalized and the unemployed. Activities are undertaken at both the conceptual and operational levels and implemented at grass-roots, community and country levels. In this context, one of UNESCO's most important lines of action was to support the design and delivery of integrated policies and programmes, especially in the field of education and training, aimed at empowering individuals and communities through a participatory approach.

101. At the conceptual and policy level, UNESCO assists Governments in identifying needs, setting up priorities and drawing up educational strategies and action plans in support of national poverty alleviation programmes. At the operational level, UNESCO supports a large number of activities and innovative projects in all regions of the world, developed on the basis of the orientations contained in the Framework for Action on the role of "Education in Poverty

Alleviation", which is currently being finalized. They often entail the use of innovative modes of educational delivery and aim at encouraging community involvement and integrated services and providing literacy and post-literacy training, as well as basic life skills in such areas as health, sanitation, environment and intensive skills training in various occupational fields tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of the target groups. The major projects include, for instance, the "Guidance, counselling and youth development programme for Africa", which addresses the poor communities especially through teachers, non-formal educators and social workers in more than 22 countries with financial support from various agencies – including DANIDA, the Rockefeller Foundation, UNFPA and UNICEF; the 6-year project, commenced in 1996, on "Enhancement of learning opportunities for marginalized youth", launched in some 15 countries across the world to encourage both attitudes (empowerment, self-confidence, participation and solidarity) and vocational aptitudes to equip marginalized youth for social and economic survival, and a number of specific projects designed to meet the specific educational needs of the disadvantaged people – including out-of-school children and unemployed young people living in conditions of extreme poverty – and implemented in various countries in Africa, Asia and the Arab States.

102. The implementation of research into the causes of poverty in specific cultural and social settings and the strengthening of research infrastructures, as well as awareness-building among policy-makers and partners concerned, including at the community level, constituted another main line of UNESCO's action. Through publications and surveys – some of them prepared in collaboration with the International Social Science Council's Comparative Research Programme on Poverty – as well as country studies and projects undertaken within the framework of the Management of Social Transformations Programme, UNESCO contributes to the advancement of empirical research on poverty issues and, at the same time, provides policy-makers with reference materials, including information on the best practices on poverty eradication and combating social exclusion.

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

103. The contribution of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (UNCHS) to the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty focuses on programmes and projects to assist developing countries reduce urban poverty at the level of slums and squatter

settlements, in line with the recommendation of Habitat Agenda. In accordance with its mandate, UNCHS provides targeted assistance to local authorities, non-governmental and community-based organizations to improve the living conditions of the urban poor, including access to land and security of tenure, housing, water supply, sanitation and other infrastructure and social services. Furthermore, and specifically within the Africa region, UNCHS has over the past years been engaged in a major effort to strengthen local research capacity on urban poverty and to promote the exchange of information thereon, with the support of the Ford Foundation. As a follow-up to the first international conference on urban poverty as well as Habitat II, the International Forum on Urban Poverty was launched in Florence, Italy, in November 1997. The central mission of this Forum is to provide international, national and local level support to partnership action aimed at the reduction of poverty in the areas of shelter and employment, transport for the urban poor, and urban violence. All of these activities represent practical contributions to the objectives of the United Nations International Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

104. Within its mandate of promoting sustainable industrial development in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, the United Nations Industrial Organization (UNIDO) continues to make significant contributions to the international community's efforts to eradicate poverty. Its ongoing programmes of assistance in the areas of micro-, small and medium enterprises, agro-based and agro-related industries, the integration of women in industrial development and rural industrial development have been designed specifically to address the needs of the poor in developing countries, particularly those in the least developed countries. At the policy level, UNIDO places emphasis on the creation of a business environment that encourages the initiatives of existing and potential micro- and small-scale entrepreneurs by promoting dialogue and partnerships between the public and private sectors. A large part of UNIDO's technical cooperation activities is devoted to building institutional capacities to effectively deliver business support services to the micro- and small-scale industry sector. Some of the recent projects aimed at poverty eradication include the provision of technical and managerial training for some 1,300 micro- and small-scale entrepreneurs in Mozambique, 20 per cent of whom were women and over 30 per cent of whom were demobilized soldiers; and strengthening a handmade paper industry in India by

applying new technologies. UNIDO also assisted 14 Latin American countries in the establishment of a regional network of 28 subcontracting and partnership exchanges linking small- and medium-scale enterprises and promoting various forms of business cooperation that have stimulated business activity and created new jobs.

International Labour Organization

105. The three major objectives of ILO are to support democracy and fundamental workers' rights, to promote employment and combat poverty, and to protect working people. Within the scope of the first United Nations Decade, and in pursuance of these objectives, the ILO, in close cooperation with agencies of the United Nations system and Bretton Woods institutions, enhances the capacity of – and provides assistance to – its constituents in the design, formulation and implementation of (a) policies; and (b) anti-poverty strategies based on job creation and the application of labour standards. Anti-poverty strategies based on job creation and the application of labour standards incorporate (i) the design and implementation of interventions to increase demand for high quality employment, (ii) the development of investment programmes, and (iii) the design and implementation of policies for the inclusion of social groups such as women and youth. Such policies also involve targeted micro-level interventions addressing the interrelated problems of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, particularly among unorganized groups of the population in the urban informal and rural sectors.

106. The creation of an enabling environment for poverty alleviation through employment-intensive growth at the macro- and sectoral levels, as well as on specific target groups, figures prominently in policy advice services provided by ILO in cooperation with UNDP in Tunisia, Egypt and Uzbekistan. Furthermore, to provide an alternative policy framework for employment-intensive growth and to design a programme of action for job creation for poverty alleviation, the Programme on Employment Generation for Poverty Reduction – better known as "Jobs for Africa" – is being implemented, with the support of UNDP, as ILO's contribution to the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. ILO's work on improving the tools for poverty monitoring include the preparation of compendia of data on the incidence of poverty and on income distribution. The second edition of the compendium came out in 1996, and the third edition is expected to be published in 1999. As part of its response to fighting unemployment and under-employment and reducing poverty in developing countries, ILO's Employment Intensive Work Programme (EIP) aims at maximizing employment

generation through public investments. More particularly, EIP has promoted private sector development (small- and medium-sized local contractors) and improvement of working conditions in the infrastructure and construction sectors (roads, buildings, irrigation and drainage systems, etc.), which account for two thirds of public investment in most developing countries. The programme promotes community-based investment programmes, with emphasis on improving the organizational and bargaining capacity of the grass-roots associations in both the rural and the urban informal, weakly organized areas. Such programmes seek to reduce poverty directly through high labour content technologies and indirectly through productivity enhancing infrastructure. The programme has been operational in about 30 to 40 countries, with an average expenditure of \$23 million per year. Over the last 10 years, 80 per cent of EIP expenditure was in Africa, and 12 per cent in Asia.

World Health Organization

107. WHO's network on Poverty and Health aims at enabling health professionals and the health sector to play an effective role in poverty reduction. It also contributes to the public debate on poverty and health, and provides collective support to political commitments to reduce poverty and improve the health status of populations. WHO ensures that all its programmes identify highly vulnerable economic groups and provide the means to improve and evaluate their health status. In its specific approach to poverty eradication, WHO's activities are oriented towards countries in greatest need. In this regard, WHO focuses its work at both the country and global levels.

108. WHO's activities at the country level include (a) reviewing national policies through in-depth analysis, and assisting in their implementation; (b) ensuring that health sector reform strategies provide for secure access of the poorest to health care and basic social services; (c) supporting Governments in advocating for the integration of health concerns into overall national development policies; and (d) creating partnerships with civil society groups, including the private sector.

109. At the international level, WHO (a) promotes wider international attention towards countries in greatest need and towards the vicious cycle of poverty and ill health, and advocates for increased technical and financial support; and (b) develops network of strategic allies by collaborating with institutions, groupings of low-income countries, such as the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, NGOs, professional associations and business enterprises, that can improve the health of the most deprived.

International Maritime Organization

110. The contribution of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to the eradication of poverty is through its work regarding the safety of navigation and the prevention of pollution from ships, the twin fundamentals governing international maritime transport, which is in large part a direct input to economic development through poverty alleviation by facilitating the liberalization and globalization of international trade and commerce. The IMO's Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP) objectives are to assist developing countries in strengthening their institutional, legal, managerial, technical and training capabilities to implement global rules and standards uniformly. The established priorities are articulated on a regional basis and targeted towards capacity-building which leads to self-reliance in the maritime industry while also generating and sustaining mass employment in the fishing, recreation, tourism and export-led industries, etc., particularly of primary agricultural products. In addition to the innumerable shore-based personnel engaged in the shipping industry, there are some 1.2 million seafarers, most of whom are drawn from developing countries.

International Civil Aviation Organization

111. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) sees the development of civil aviation as an increasingly important factor in the future alleviation of poverty in developing countries. In fact, civil aviation is having a most significant impact on the economies of most developing States and is affecting, both directly and indirectly, the standard of living of the citizens of those States. The positive effects of air transport on the immediate living conditions of the very poor can readily be seen in the emergency distribution of essential foods, medicine and other commodities, and in the transport of health and social workers to remote locations where traditional means of transport are often impractical or impossible. These relief services, however essential in the short term, do not have a significant long-term effect on poverty alleviation. Rather, it is the utilization of air transport that serves as a mechanism for trade and communication, a significant employer and a conduit for technology transfer, as well as a powerful engine for economic development.

International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

112. The activity of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) regarding the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication

of Poverty is in the context of research on gender-specific poverty. In this context, INSTRAW has elaborated a project proposal to examine "Women's Poverty in Rural Africa" in its 1998-1999 biennium. This project, which entails research and an expert group meeting, aims to test the "feminization of poverty" thesis, which appears to be hypothetical in most cases. Through the implementation of the project, INSTRAW would undertake research, using rapid rural appraisal methods, to identify the structural determinants of female poverty in rural Africa, develop quantitative poverty indicators, typologize poverty in terms of degrees of vulnerability, and establish policy guidelines for gender-aware poverty alleviation and eradication strategies. To better understand the structural causes of poverty, the research will be carried out in rural communities of three countries chosen from stratified categories of low-, medium- and high-income African countries. INSTRAW will initiate actions to secure the collaboration of ECA and UNDP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in elaborating the research design, identifying the study sites, as well as in designing a joint anti-poverty campaign.

United Nations University

113. The United Nations University (UNU) has been undertaking activities of research, capacity-building and networking in the developing countries that are not designed to address poverty eradication directly, but contribute to eradicating poverty and hunger, which is a fundamental form of poverty. Some of UNU's selected activities include its contribution to Africa's development, food and nutrition and environmental issues. UNU, for example, is carrying out a research and capacity-building programme oriented toward development in Africa from the perspective of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the United Nations system-wide Initiative on Africa. The programme is contributing to the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) in October 1998, which is intended to produce an action-oriented agenda for African development towards the twenty-first century.

114. The current UNU Programme on Food and Nutrition has also made a widely recognized contribution to the solution of the major nutrition problems of developing countries and to increasing the competence of developing country institutions to deal with national food and nutrition problems. The programme continues to focus on the functional consequences of iron deficiency; the damaging influences of chronic dietary energy deficiency; the

introduction of anthropological methodologies for the evaluation and compilation of nutrition and health-related interventions; the generation and compilation of food composition data in all regions and countries of the world, bringing advanced information technologies to the developing countries; and the collection of all dietary intake studies in each country over the past 30 years as a basis for epidemiological studies of diet and disease and other uses. These activities and findings of research in progress are reported in the UNU Food and Nutrition Bulletin, a widely read nutrition journal in developing countries. Many activities of the programme are jointly organized with or supported by other United Nations organizations, including WHO, FAO, UNICEF, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Bank and UNESCO. The programme puts UNU in a leading and mediating role of the ACC Subcommittee on Nutrition, and is seeking further collaboration and better coordination in the United Nations system. Furthermore, the People, Land Management and Environmental Change (PLEC) programme of UNU is a demonstration and capacity-building project concerned with the conservation of biological diversity in agricultural lands located in priority ecosystems and managed by farmers and pastoralists. The objective of the project is to develop sustainable and participatory approaches to biodiversity conservation within agricultural systems, which also contributes to achieving world food security.

World Bank

115. The Bank's fundamental objective is to help its partner countries reduce poverty and improve living standards. The Bank's progress in implementing its poverty strategy is documented in the report on poverty reduction and the World Bank. The Poverty Reduction and Economic Management (PREM) Network was formed in July 1997 to ensure that the Bank makes the greatest contribution that it can to poverty reduction. The Network has a Poverty Reduction Board that has identified two shifts in implementation strategy that focus on formulating poverty-focused strategies and assessing the impact of Bank projects on the poor. Poverty assessments, the main vehicle for analytical work on poverty, have been completed for the majority of member countries and periodic updates are planned. The Bank's country assistance strategies have come to rely more closely on the analysis and recommendations of the poverty assessments. In addition, new guidelines are being developed

to ensure that country assistance strategies are more poverty-focused, participatory and results-oriented. Poverty-targeted lending continues to be monitored, and operational guidelines are being updated to better reflect current practices. The Bank is working with Governments and other agencies to establish effective and sustainable poverty monitoring systems as well as analytical capabilities in client countries. The greater use of participatory approaches in Bank work has also helped to ensure that the poor are heard in the formulation of strategies and projects. Furthermore, empowerment, participation and social capital are recognized as important means for action against poverty. The *World Development Report, 2000* will be on poverty and will involve a highly collaborative process. It will also be a major organizing force for new work in the study of poverty and the goals of social inclusion and more equitable economic growth.

116. In collaboration with UNICEF and UNDP, the Bank is working on a poverty monitoring methods programme. Among the programme's activities is an ongoing exchange of view on approaches for monitoring the social outcomes of development, with the goal of developing a core monitoring instrument. At the last meeting held in April 1998 in New York, the UNICEF/World Bank/UNDP Working Group on Monitoring Poverty Alleviation Activities exchanged information on working plans for poverty research and analytical studies, discussed follow-up plans for poverty monitoring activities, and agreed on next steps. Moreover, the World Bank, the donor community, and partner countries are working on ways to strengthen their partnerships in order to meet the basic development goals to be achieved by the year 2015. Among the objectives is halving the incidence of extreme poverty. As part of the effort to track progress in achieving goals, the Bank is taking a leading role in defining Strategy 21 indicators. The Bank has organized informal groups to define poverty and environment indicators and, with UNDP and OECD, organized meetings to decide on a set of core indicators, which have been incorporated in the 1998 edition of *World Development Indicators*. The Bank has also been involved in follow-up meetings with OECD/DAC on how achievable the goals are and on the informal network on poverty reduction.

Notes

- ¹ *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E 96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex 1.
- ² *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 9* (E/1998/29).
- ³ A/CONF 157/24 (Part I), chap. III.
- ⁴ General Assembly resolution 41/128, annex.
- ⁵ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 6* (E/1997/26).
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 1998, *Supplement No. 6* (E/1998/26).
- ⁷ General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex.
- ⁸ *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E 95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.



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**Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief
assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance:
special economic assistance to individual countries or regions**

Emergency economic assistance to the Comoros

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 51/30 F of 13 December 1996, the General Assembly requested all Member States and donor bodies, as well as the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations, to grant to the Comoros all necessary humanitarian, financial, economic and technical assistance, in order to enable it to achieve national reconstruction and sustainable development. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to dispatch to Moroni a multidisciplinary humanitarian and technical assessment mission in order to carry out a detailed study of the needs of the country in terms of assistance and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. This report is presented to the General Assembly in response to that resolution.

II. General background

2. The three islands which make up the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros (Grande Comores, Anjouan, Mohéli)¹ and their 509,000 inhabitants are going through a period of economic and political change; this had triggered a social crisis without precedent in the country's history. The Comoros gained its independence in 1975 and economic conditions have been deteriorating since 1985; the situation worsened in 1997 due to the crisis created by the separatist aspirations of Anjouan and to severe shortages of electricity and water which affected all the main branches of the economy. Growth slowed in 1997 and real gross domestic product (GDP) declined by 1 per cent resulting in a 2 per cent drop in per capita income.

* A/53/150.



3. Per capita income has been falling steadily in real terms: in 1997, it was close to 17 per cent lower than the 1985 level. With a per capita GDP of close to US\$ 450, a life expectancy at birth of 57 years, an adult literacy rate of 56 per cent and rising poverty, the Comoros is one of the poorest countries in the world; in 1997, it ranked 140th out of 175 countries in terms of the human development index published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

4. There are a number of obstacles which hinder the development of the Comoros: it is divided up into several islands; it has a very young and rapidly growing population and is therefore densely populated; its natural resources are limited; it has a shortage of skilled manpower in the context of widespread unemployment; it is heavily dependent on external aid, it has a fragile ecosystem and is vulnerable to natural disasters. In addition, there is political instability reflected in repeated coups attempts which have impeded social and economic development since independence.

5. These difficulties are exacerbated by structural problems. Efforts to give a boost to the private sector have not produced the hoped-for results. The economy is not competitive and it is hampered by a lack of skilled human resources and high production costs, due primarily to the inflationary budget deficits. Deficiencies in the conduct of State affairs and in the management of public resources are having repercussions on private enterprise and productivity.

6. The serious crisis that has affected public finances in recent years is due in large measure to the underdeveloped productive activities and the falling prices of raw materials which account for the bulk of the country's foreign exchange earnings. The indecisive manner in which the economy has been managed and deficiencies in the conduct of public affairs have resulted in the squandering of public funds and have made the national economy non-competitive on foreign markets. As a result the State has been unable to pay civil servants' salaries and to honour its external debt service payments.

7. The current socio-economic situation of the Comoros is disturbing, and can be summed up as follows: rapid population growth coupled with rising unemployment; steadily declining per capita income; a shrinking export sector; an increasingly costly and decreasingly competitive economy; deteriorating economic and social infrastructure and limited investment flows.

III. Political and economic context

Political situation

8. On the political level, the election, in March 1996, of Mr. Mohamed Taki Abdoukarim to the office of President of the Republic put an end to the events which had been adversely affecting Comorian political life. A new constitution was adopted by referendum in June 1996 and a new legislative assembly was elected the following December. According to the new constitution, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros is a federal State based on the principle of Islam. The President of the Republic, the Head of State, is elected by universal suffrage for a six-year term. The members of the Government are appointed by the President of the Republic on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, the Head of Government. The State is organized into governorates, one for each island. Each governorate has broad administrative autonomy and is headed by a Governor who is appointed by the President of the Republic on the recommendation of the council of each island. Legislative

power is held by a single-chamber parliament, the federal assembly, whose 43 members are elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term.

9. The territorial integrity of the Comoros has been threatened, since March 1997, by the crisis currently affecting the island of Anjouan and, to a lesser extent, the island of Mohéli. The crisis is primarily economic in nature and is due to the drop in real income, the declining level of well-being – which was already modest – and the steady rise in unemployment and poverty.

10. In order to deal with the current separatist trends and to safeguard the country's territorial integrity, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), acting in cooperation with the League of Arab States, has been mediating in an effort to help all Comorian parties reach a lasting solution leading to the restoration of peace, security and stability.

11. The Secretary-General, while reaffirming his support for the unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros, has called on the parties to seek a peaceful, negotiated solution to the situation. He has also designated his Special Representative for the Great Lakes region as observer to the meetings between the parties being held under the auspices of OAU.

Economic and social situation

12. During the first 10 years following the Comoros' accession to independence in 1975, the economy grew – stimulated by public investment in social and economic infrastructure – at the rate of 6 per cent annually; once the large-scale projects were completed, towards the middle of the 1980s, the pace of growth slowed and between 1986 and 1996 the GDP increased on average by only 1.2 per cent; as a result per capita income dropped by about 2 per cent annually.

13. The Comorian economy is, above all a rural economy. The industrial sector is limited to small-scale manufacturing activities, and tourism is not, as yet, very much developed. Agriculture (including fisheries), trade and public administration make up the bulk of economic activity and account for some 85 per cent of GDP, as compared with miscellaneous services and construction which account for 11 per cent and the manufacturing industry, which accounts for only 4 per cent. Trade in goods and services (imports plus exports) accounts for more than half of GDP. The Comoros is, moreover, a consumer economy; during the period 1985–1996 consumption on average exceeded production by at least 2 per cent of GDP; the difference was financed by foreign savings – primarily in the form of public and private transfers – which also covered total gross domestic investment.

14. The agricultural sector taken as a whole – including fisheries, livestock breeding and forestry – represents nearly 40 per cent of GDP and provides employment for 70 per cent of the working population. Within the sector, production of food, which is increasingly consumed on the spot, accounts for more than half of the value added, whereas fisheries, livestock breeding and forestry account for an additional 35 to 40 per cent and exports for 10 to 15 per cent. Although they account for a small share of GDP, exports of agricultural produce make up 95 per cent of Comorian exports. Food imports alone – primarily rice, a staple which provides half the calories consumed by the population – outweigh export earnings from cash crops.

15. The population has grown poorer due to the overall deterioration of the economy and the growing population. Low purchasing power, compounded by the 33 per cent devaluation of the Comorian franc in 1994 in relation to the French franc and the exorbitant prices – relatively speaking – of foodstuffs, appears to be the cause of food insecurity primarily

among the poorest strata. Poverty varies from one island to the next and is especially prevalent in Anjouan due to the population density and the drop in the prices of the main export products, primarily cloves. An annual per capita income of US\$ 440 is the generally accepted definition of the threshold of absolute poverty; the 1995 household survey showed that 46 per cent of households – that is to say about half the population of Comoros – now lives below the poverty line.

16. The economy has been slowing down since 1985, revealing weaknesses in the management of the public sector and resulting in an untenable financial situation; this has contributed to an erosion of confidence both within the country and among foreign donors. Finding itself unable to borrow abroad on market terms and given the limitations of resorting to domestic credit, the Comoros has financed its growing deficits primarily by falling behind in its payments, both internal and external.

17. Starting in 1990, the Government embarked, with the assistance of the international community, on a vast stabilization and structural adjustment programme in order to reorganize public finances, liberalize the economy and strengthen institutional capacities. However, this programme has had only limited success due, primarily, to the continued uncertainty of the political climate which has made it difficult to achieve the targets set in the structural adjustment programme.

Recent economic development

18. The Comorian economy showed very modest real growth in 1996, growing by around 1 per cent as compared with 2.3 per cent in 1995, a drop of some 5 per cent over a two-year period, whereas the population continued to grow at roughly 2.7 per cent per year. The economy remains very fragile because of the lack of diversification, the lack of competitiveness, the very high factor costs and the very small domestic market. The downturn in national production is reflected in most sectors of the economy. The 12-month rate of inflation in 1996 was kept under 3.5 per cent because of the prudent monetary policy followed by the central bank and because the Comoros is part of the franc zone. In the meantime the external position weakened appreciably; gross official reserves amount to the equivalent of 7 months of imports of goods and services (excluding factor incomes) and external arrears are estimated at US\$ 43 million, which is equivalent to 19.1 per cent of GDP.

19. Public finances are characterized by a large structural deficit. The State's tax receipts remained low in 1996, at 12.8 per cent of GDP and came essentially from indirect taxes on foreign trade. This is due to the overall weakness of the economy. Current expenditures (budgetary and extrabudgetary) came to about 20.7 per cent of GDP in 1996. Capital expenditure remains low due to the lack of counterpart funds from project disbursements – a response by some donors to the accumulated arrears of external debt-service payments. Suspension of the payment of grants for the budget, pending implementation of a proper structural adjustment programme, has inevitably resulted in a further accumulation of domestic and external arrears. It is estimated that the domestic and external arrears amount to 9.6 per cent and 19.1 per cent respectively, of GDP.

20. As for the external situation the terms of trade have deteriorated and there is a structural balance-of-payments deficit. Exports cover only 13 per cent of imports. The Markets for the Comoros' traditional exports have been weak and this development was marked, in 1996, by a further drop in earnings from commodity exports and by a decrease in the value of imports. In addition, external balance-of-payments assistance was suspended

and debt-service payments rose. Monetary assets amount to 7 months of imports of goods and services, excluding factor income, and the external debt is currently estimated at 86.6 per cent of GDP while debt-service payments correspond to 42.7 per cent of exports of goods and non-factor services.

21. The social sectors have been particularly hard hit by the deteriorating economic situation. The State budget has allocated very little money for education and training and this has resulted in unprecedented shortages of material and equipment in the schools and in significant deficiencies regarding initial and ongoing teacher training. The same is true of the health sector for it has not received the necessary funding. The qualitative shortcomings of the social and health infrastructures are compounded by a shortage of trained personnel, a general state of decay and shortage of equipment in the health centres and hospitals and the difficulty of obtaining essential drugs.

22. Faced with the deteriorating financial situation in 1996 and the growing arrears in salaries resulting therefrom, the Comorian authorities concluded what was called a monitoring programme from February 1997 to July 1997 with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the purpose of which was to correct the accumulated delays in the introduction of economic reforms and to restore confidence with a view to creating conditions conducive to a recovery of the economic situation so as to resume the dialogue with the international financial institutions.

23. The information available for 1997 suggests that GDP growth will be under 1 per cent. The economic recession has worsened due to the complete collapse of the energy sector which has led, on the one hand, to severe electricity shortages and, on the other hand, to the Anjouan separatist crisis; this has delayed the normal execution of the programme throughout the national territory.

IV. Main development problems

24. *Population density.* In 1996, the Comorian population was estimated to be 509,000 inhabitants over an area of 1,860 km², which gives a population density of 274 inhabitants per km², one of the highest in Africa. The population is further characterized by its youth: 45 per cent is under the age of 15 and 57 per cent is under the age of 20. This young population is a heavy burden for the State, which has to provide for its education. The consequences in terms of the investment to be made are considerable, not to mention the repercussions at the level of the demand for food.

25. *Poor health conditions.* The infant mortality rate is very high (103/100,000) as is the maternal mortality rate, which is estimated at 500 per 100,000 live births. Malaria is endemic and affects a significant proportion of the population. Malnutrition is common and the calorie ration is only about 1,754 calories per day, with variations between the islands. This poor health situation is reflected in a life expectancy at birth of less than 57 years.

26. *Low rate of activity and high unemployment rate.* The vast majority of the population lives in rural areas, at a subsistence level. The gross employment rate of the population is relatively low, about 28 per cent, corresponding to an unemployment rate of 72 per cent according to the most recent population census in 1991. The labour market is characterized by a labour supply which is continuing to grow rapidly with an influx of young people of working age estimated at 12,000 persons per year. The active population is estimated at 3.4 per cent of the total population, of which over one third is without stable employment. The formal demand for labour is decreasing, which is reflected in an unemployment rate estimated at 30 per cent of the active population.

27. *Environmental and urban problems.* The sustainable development of the Comoros is gravely threatened by a rapid deterioration of the natural environment. The land environment is subjected to massive deforestation because of demographic pressure on the arable lands and the need for energy resources. The coastal environment is threatened by the removal of sand and coral for construction. As to the urban environment, it is affected by the adverse consequences of demographic growth and the growing impoverishment of the population.

28. *Vulnerability to external shocks and remoteness from the rest of the world.* Like all small countries, and tropical islands in particular, the Comoros depends for its exports on a small number of agricultural products and must, on the other hand, import almost all the consumer goods, petroleum products and raw materials which it needs. Its imports are therefore particularly sensitive to external shocks and the resulting deterioration in the terms of trade. The Comoros is far away from the main world markets, which gives rise to particularly high transport costs and consequently reduces its development potential.

V. Structural reforms

29. The Comoros has instituted a number of structural reforms in order to embark on a course of sustainable development. Four major types of action have been undertaken: macro-economic reforms, reforms of the administration, privatization of public enterprises and liberalization of the economy.

30. *Internal adjustment and financial reforms of the public sector.* The immediate cause of the economic and financial difficulties of the Comoros is the adverse effects of budgetary management on internal and external balances. The goal is to remedy the situation by bringing down the consolidated public deficit to a manageable amount, without an accumulation of arrears. A structural revision of the tax system is under way, the goal being to simplify and reduce the number of the rates, identify taxpayers and streamline administrative procedures. The strategy adopted to contain public expenditure is to reduce the wage bill by reducing the staff of the civil service and eliminating duplication.

31. *Reforms of public enterprises.* A reform of public enterprises involving the privatization of management through concession is under way with a view to increasing the efficiency of these enterprises, establishing favourable conditions for the development of the private sector and creating employment. So far, the national water and electricity company has been privatized, and preliminary financial studies on the privatization of the oil company are being conducted.

32. *Civil service reforms.* While reducing staff, the public authorities are seeking to make the administration more effective. The strategy is to evaluate and redefine the functions and objectives of public bodies while helping them to strengthen their means of action.

33. *Measures to benefit the private sector.* The action taken by the public authorities aims to make the private sector the engine of growth for investment, production and employment. Among the actions which are being undertaken are the abolition of administrative measures for the control of foreign trade and prices; the adaptation of the tax structure so as to promote private investment; and the preparation of a legal study and a plan of action to guarantee the execution of contracts, and the free opening and closure of enterprises.

34. *Reduction of population growth.* One of the major problems which the Comoros has to face is the rapid growth of its population, which increases the demand for social services

and jobs and puts increasing pressure on a fragile ecosystem. Measures are being taken so that all Comorians, whatever their income level, have access to family planning services.

35. *Human resources development.* The national policy is designed to improve the quality of primary education and basic health services. A master plan for education is being drawn up, which accords priority to improving school attendance rates and adult literacy rates and enhancing the quality of teaching through an increase in its internal and external effectiveness. The Comorian Government has undertaken a policy to promote the health of its population through adherence to various strategies, such as the 1978 Declaration of Alma Alta on primary health care as a basic strategy for the development of the health sector, and the Bamako initiative.

36. *Preservation of the environment and proper management of natural resources.* The Government recognizes the principle of integrating the environmental dimension in the formulation and implementation of development programmes. In coordination with the formulation of the national policy on the environment, the Government has adopted an agricultural development strategy aimed mainly at ensuring food security and the nutritional balance of the population, promoting export crops, encouraging the creation of productive employment in the agricultural and para-agricultural sector and ensuring sustainable land use.

VI. External aid

37. The Comorian economy is heavily dependent on external aid. Thus, the annual net value per inhabitant of official development assistance averaged 90 dollars for the period 1992-1996, or the equivalent of 25 per cent of GDP. External aid, proportionately, remains high in comparison with the economic weight of the country and its population. It came to about 47 million dollars per year, all assistance combined, over the past five years.

38. From 1993 to 1996, the international community contributed some US\$ 179.5 million in official development assistance. The amount declined from US\$ 48.8 million in 1993 to US\$ 41 million in 1996, a decline of 16 per cent over four years. In 1996, external aid reached its lowest level in the past six years; 77 per cent of external aid is in the form of grants and 23 per cent in the form of concessional loans. The priority socio-economic sectors receiving aid are education, public health, integrated rural development, transport and agriculture.

VII. Initiatives in aid coordination

39. The Government has chosen the round table mechanism, with the support of UNDP, to strengthen the dialogue on policies and strategies with its development partners and promote the mobilization of external resources. Thus, sectoral consultations on agriculture and the environment were held in Geneva in 1995, and consultations on education are planned for the end of 1998. The Government plans to convene a global round table conference focused on combating poverty.

VIII. Main initiatives of the United Nations system

40. The main agencies of the United Nations system which are active in the Comoros are UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) are involved as executing agencies for programmes financed by UNDP or by UNFPA.

41. With regard to the United Nations system, the UNDP resident representative, in his capacity as resident coordinator, presides over coordination meetings between the agencies for the purpose of study, coordination and the adoption of collective decisions on policy, programming and management aspects. In order to strengthen the role of the resident coordinator and coordination among the agencies, an agreement was reached in 1995 to establish an ad hoc advisory field-level committee, including all United Nations agency heads, on the basis of the coordination mechanism envisaged in General Assembly resolution 47/199 of 22 December 1992.

42. The various United Nations agencies in the Comoros are working closely to meet the objectives and priorities defined in the country strategy note, drawn up jointly by the Government and the United Nations system, which lays down the guidelines and overall strategy of the system in support of the development efforts of the Comoros. The United Nations system has instituted a harmonization of the programming cycles for the period 1997–2001 in order to further improve programme design and implementation.

43. In recent years, the coordination of activities between United Nations agencies has been strengthened. The members of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy, consisting of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO, have worked in close collaboration with the World Bank, other United Nations agencies and donors. A consultation mechanism has been established in the area of health through a sectoral committee bringing together the Government and the donors involved in the health sector, as in the case of action to combat the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) undertaken in the context of the Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS (UNAIDS). The consultation mechanism worked well during the preparation of cooperation programmes of United Nations agencies present in the Comoros. Collaboration between the agencies is also effective in the fields of population, education/training, health, emergency assistance and institution-building.

44. *UNDP.* The main objective of UNDP cooperation, in the context of its new country programme, is to support the efforts of the Comoros for sustainable human development and poverty reduction. The new country programme, or country cooperation framework, will cover the period 1997–2001, in accordance with the country strategy note.

45. UNDP support is aimed at sustainable capacity-building, to the exclusion of palliative and short-term measures, through advisory and training activities. To this end, UNDP activities are integrated in the local environment and mobilize each of the parties around this common objective. The approach utilized is very participatory and involves all the actors concerned: institutions, associations and local communities.

46. UNDP action emphasizes the programme approach, namely activities within the framework of well-defined national policies and programmes. This action consists of helping national authorities to develop medium-term policies and development strategies for sustainable human development and, in particular, the formulation of a national poverty

reduction strategy. UNDP initiated the reflection on a long-term vision for the Comoros, with the support of the Africa's futures project.

47. Action is being carried out at the level of civil society and decision-makers to develop a national dialogue on poverty, empower grass-roots communities and their associations to manage the development process, and forge alliances between the different segments of society, the national authorities and the donor community around the common objective, sustainable human development.

48. In the context of support for the formulation of development policies, UNDP has played a crucial role in action which led to the adoption of the national policy on the environment and the environmental plan of action, the objective of which is to preserve the biodiversity of the Comoros. Similarly, UNDP action has been predominant in organizing general meetings of the private sector which led to the establishment of the Association for the Promotion of the Private Sector aimed at facilitating the creation of enterprises and guiding and advising new entrepreneurs. Among the results of UNDP action to benefit the private sector are the establishment of a single office for entrepreneurs, liberalization of the chamber of commerce, industry and agriculture, and the establishment of professional organizations.

49. In the context of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, which has as its priority area the promotion of information technology for development, UNDP organized an exploratory mission in March 1998 to prepare for the forthcoming arrival of a mission to formulate the framework for assistance to the Comoros of the project "Internet initiative for Africa – sustainable development".

50. The report on sustainable human development in the Comoros issued in 1997 is regarded as a technical document which should make it possible to lay the foundations of a national poverty reduction strategy. In respect of the development of human resources, UNDP financed the preparation and dissemination of a master plan for education and intends to complete the process, basing its submission on sectoral consultations in the framework of the round-table process, as soon as the political situation allows.

51. UNDP is continuing its action in the area of aid coordination and resource mobilization to meet national development priorities. UNDP support is being provided, in particular, through the round-table mechanism and through the activities of the United Nations resident coordinator system. This support also aims to strengthen the capacities of national institutions responsible for aid coordination; UNDP assistance has made it possible to update economic statistics and aggregates of the nation's economic accounts and modernize the data bank of the public investment programme. The resource mobilization strategy established for the period 1995–1996 has led to a financing of programme activities at a level of 47 per cent of approved funds.

52. UNDP, along with national authorities, local communities and the international community, is supporting the implementation of development programmes in priority areas of sustainable human development. These capacity-building activities will be formulated and carried out with the close participation of local communities and associations concerned, which must be regarded as full-fledged partners bearing new responsibilities in the implementation of the development process.

53. The UNDP programme of activities for the period 1997–2001 is developed around four complementary areas that correspond fully to national development priorities, as identified in the country strategy note prepared by the Government with UNDP support, namely: (a) strengthening of governance; (b) improvement of the quality and accessibility of health services; (c) strengthening of production capacities and development of sustainable

livelihoods for the most disadvantaged; and (d) environmental conservation. The activities carried out within the framework of the first area of the programme are part of continued UNDP support for administrative reform in the organization of presidential and legislative elections.

54. UNFPA: The first UNFPA programme of assistance (1989–1993) focused on maternal and child health and family planning. The assistance provided by UNFPA enabled the Government to define the framework for a national population policy and to improve its data base in that field.

55. The UNFPA programme of assistance for the 1997–2001 period will focus on reproductive health and family planning. The current programme should result in the strengthening of the technical and institutional capacities of the Ministry of Health by facilitating the population's access to quality services and laying the groundwork for the national reproductive health programme. UNFPA is the largest donor for population activities in the Comoros: it plays a dominant role in the area of family planning and in the design of a national programme for the integration of women into the development process.

56. UNICEF: The UNICEF programme focuses on the health/nutrition, education, water and sanitation sectors. The strategy it has chosen is based on strengthening community participation in a spirit of greater sharing of responsibilities among the Government, the community and UNICEF with a view to improving services.

57. In the area of health, assistance revolves around three projects: primary health care/Bamako initiatives, expanded immunization plan and health promotion. The programme seeks to guarantee 60 per cent of the population access to essential quality care, both preventive and curative, including basic health care (emphasis is laid on malaria and diarrhoeal disease control and access to essential drugs); consolidation of the Expanded Programme on Immunization and the promotion of appropriate low-cost technologies with a view to improving the water supply, hygiene and the environment. Moreover, the programme is supplemented by the activities of UNDP, the World Bank and WHO in the areas of infrastructure and training.

58. The education programme is aimed at increasing the net school enrolment rate and improving learning results with a view to increasing the number of pupils who complete the primary cycle. More importantly, it is hoped that increased teacher training and parent participation in school management and the establishment of a greater number of school boards, composed of teachers, parents and community leaders, will result in better prioritization and identification of activities and increased acceptance of responsibility by each participant (Government, community and other outside partners). The aim is to reach a total of 52 schools, or 20 per cent; to do so additional funds will be needed.

59. The programme for social planning, advocacy and social mobilization is aimed at strengthening national planning capacities and strengthening the system for the collection and analysis of social statistics designed to improve the follow-up of trends and introduce appropriate remedial action. It will help to follow up the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to carry out advocacy activities aimed at decision-makers, society, families and children. This may become a vital tool in identifying trends and making necessary programme adjustments. The UNFPA programmes established as a complement to those of UNICEF are the driving forces behind it.

60. World Health Organization: Technical cooperation between the Comoros and WHO is aimed at helping the country to achieve priority health development goals under its plan entitled "Perspectives to the year 2010". Elaborated by the Government with the assistance of WHO, UNICEF and UNDP, the plan's main objectives are to curb population growth,

to improve the effectiveness of the public health system and to ensure effective community participation in the management of health services.

61. Over the past two years, WHO has supported government initiatives to strengthen the health system in the areas of management, financing of services, decentralization and integration of programmes, community participation, the functioning of health districts, personnel training and disease control, particularly, malaria control and the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STD), and preparedness for and responses to endemic emergencies.

62. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: By early 1997, FAO, which has long been involved in the rural development of the Comoros, was executing only one project, aimed at strengthening veterinary services and supporting the development of livestock-raising. Nonetheless, the exploratory mission of June 1997 for the purpose of laying the groundwork for a Special Food Security Programme for the Comoros and the recent visit of the Director-General of FAO seem to indicate that it will become more active in the coming months.

63. World Food Programme: The World Food Programme, which has been involved in the Comoros since 1979, ceased its activities there in December 1996. During that period, WFP lent its support mainly to rural development, food security, the health system and school cafeterias by providing supplies to hospitals, health centres and primary schools. Nonetheless, further to recommendations by the inter-agency mission conducted from 28 August to 6 September 1997, dispatched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in response to General Assembly resolution 51/30 F, WFP is finalizing a special food assistance programme. In this context, WFP will distribute food supplies, particularly rice, to the most vulnerable population groups whose need for food assistance has been clearly established.

IX. Multidisciplinary United Nations Mission

64. The United Nations sent a multidisciplinary mission to the Comoros on 25 August 1997, aimed at evaluating the country's emergency humanitarian and economic assistance needs and preparing a plan of action for submission to the international community, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/30 F. Participants in this two-week mission included representatives of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Political Affairs, UNDP, UNICEF, FAO and WFP.

65. The mission found that the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros needs immediate assistance in the areas of food, agriculture, livestock-raising, fisheries, health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation without overlooking education in respect of population issues. A rapid response is necessary in order to meet immediate and essential needs which the vast majority of the target population (about 40 per cent) cannot satisfy owing to the deterioration of social and economic conditions. Estimates of these needs are given in the table contained in the annex.

66. The emergency assistance programme recommended for a six-month period is not the traditional type of humanitarian assistance which is provided in the context of armed struggle or in the wake of natural disaster, but it is nonetheless of the highest priority and urgency in view of the socio-economic crisis currently rocking the country; the many incidents that have resulted in violent clashes and deaths can be taken as a warning that the situation is gradually deteriorating and could become really serious unless steps are taken to help the population groups currently in economic distress.

67. An ambitious development programme will have to be elaborated and implemented with the support of the international community, in order to take over once the recommended emergency activities come to an end.

68. The mission's recommendations by sector are outlined in the table contained in the annex.

Notes

¹ The fourth island of the archipelago, Mayotte, remains under French administration.

Annex I

Follow-up to the multidisciplinary mission

1. The efforts of the Government and of Comorian civil society will be extremely crucial in implementating the mission's proposals in practice, and the United Nations can count on these efforts.
2. Coordination of the various activities is essential in order to achieve tangible results and thus prevent efforts from becoming unfocused. To that end, such coordination should take place under the auspices of the resident coordinator of the United Nations system in the Comoros.
3. Each of the agencies in the United Nations system carrying out activities within the framework of the emergency programme to revitalize the socio-economic activities of the Comoros shall have technical and operational responsibility for the aspects identified as being normally within its sphere of competence and its mandate.
4. Each of the activities recommended within the framework of the emergency programme will be the subject, where necessary, of a request and, possibly, preparations in accordance with the procedures of the potential donor.
5. A strong appeal is made to the international community, particularly the donor community, to provide the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros with the assistance it urgently needs, as described in the annex of this report.

Annex II

Table of recommendations, by sector

<i>Project title</i>	<i>Beneficiaries</i>	<i>Budget (US\$)</i>	<i>Planning executing agency</i>
Governance			
1. Strengthening of capacities for good governance	Entire population	100 to 150 000	UNDP
Agriculture and fisheries			
2. Emergency assistance to provide seeds, agricultural implements and veterinary products on the three islands	7 000 families	381 000	FAO/local and international NGOs + regional agriculture offices
3. Programme to compensate the owners of animals infected with anthrax in the Comoros	To be determined	70 000	FAO
4. Rehabilitation of fishery conservation infrastructures on Anjouan	3 100 fishermen	90 000	FAO/regional office and fishermen's associations
5. Promotion of activities in support of young rural entrepreneurs on Anjouan	820 people drawn from among young fishermen, farmers and agriculture students	216 000	FAO
6. Strengthening of veterinary services to support the implementation of micro-initiatives by young people in agriculture, beekeeping and livestock farming	About 500 young people	402 000 (financing already assured)	FAO
Food			
7. Basic food ration for food-for-work projects (see FAO project on seeds and agricultural implements)	49 000 on Anjouan and 7 000 on Mohéli	4.7 million	WFP, FAO and NGOs
8. Food for nutrition therapy	To be determined on the basis of the results of the nutrition survey	50 000 (supplementing the UNICEF regular programme)	UNICEF and NGOs
9. Food and nutritional monitoring	In poorest areas of Anjouan	To be determined	FAO/World Bank
10. Strengthening of the primary health care, vaccination and health promotion programme	Extension of the programme to 75 per cent of the health centres	100 000 (in addition to existing financing)	UNICEF

<i>Project title</i>	<i>Beneficiaries</i>	<i>Budget (US\$)</i>	<i>Planning/executing agency</i>
11. Development of a social statistical information system, thus helping to evaluate the state of social services to the population	All three islands	50 000	UNICEF
Water and sanitation			
12. Maintenance and management of water supply infrastructure	Priority to regions on the three islands, with emphasis on Anjouan and Mohéli	180 000 (in addition to the existing budget for the next six months)	UNICEF and NGOS
13. Improvement of latrines, waste management and environmental protection	Priority to regions, with emphasis on Anjouan		UNICEF and NGOs
Education			
14. Basic school supplies for primary pupils	10 000 pupils	200 000	UNICEF



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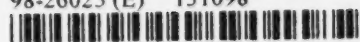
Macroeconomic policy questions: trade and development

Transit environment in the landlocked States in Central Asia and their transit neighbours

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the General Assembly, as requested in its resolution 51/168 of 16 December 1996, the report prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on the transit environment in the landlocked States of Central Asia and their transit neighbours (see annex).

* A/53/150.



Annex

**Report prepared by the United Nations Conference on
Trade and Development on the transit environment
in the landlocked States of Central Asia and their
transit neighbours**

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1-4	3
II. Economic recovery and the emerging trade and transit patterns in Central Asia ...	5-31	3
A. Economic recovery	5-8	3
B. The emerging trade pattern	9-10	5
C. Alternative transit transport routes and pipelines	11-31	6
1. New pipeline project proposals	15-16	8
2. Rail, road and inland water transport	17-31	9
(a) Rail and road links through the Russian Federation	21-22	11
(b) Trans-Caspian route by rail and road	23-24	11
(c) Rail and road link to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Persian Gulf and Turkey	25-26	11
(d) Rail and road link to China	27-28	14
(e) Other rail and road links	29-31	14
III. Measures under way to improve the efficiency of transit transport in Central Asia	32-55	15
A. Measures designed to overcome physical infrastructure bottlenecks	34-35	16
B. Measures designed to overcome non-physical barriers	36-55	16
1. Measures designed to improve transport operations	37-42	17
(a) Railways transport operations	37-40	17
(b) Road transport operations	41-42	17
2. Legal and administrative measures designed to facilitate transit transport	43-48	18
3. Institutional support arrangements and human resources development	49-55	19
(a) Role of Governments	50-51	20
(b) Role of the private sector	52	20
(c) Role of human resources development	53-55	20

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 51/168 of 16 December 1996, the General Assembly took note of the progress report by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on measures designed to improve the transit transport environment in Central Asia. (A/51/288). It also took note of the results of the Technical Meeting on Central Asia's Transit Transport Links with World Markets (see UNCTAD/LLDC/Misc.4) held at Ankara from 7 to 9 November 1995 under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNCTAD.
2. The Technical Meeting considered appropriate next steps towards a transit transport framework agreement in Central Asia. It also urged participating countries to accede to transport and transit conventions and to conclude bilateral agreements designed to strengthen transit transport facilitation. It further called for an effective regional institutional mechanism that would promote a harmonized approach to transit transport issues and urged international organizations to support regional transit transport cooperation.
3. In its resolution 51/168, the General Assembly also invited the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and the Governments concerned, in cooperation with UNDP, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and relevant regional and international organizations and in accordance with approved programme priorities and within existing financial resources, to continue elaborating a programme for improving the efficiency of the current transit environment in the newly independent and developing landlocked States in Central Asia and their transit developing neighbours, and requested the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to prepare a report on the progress made in this regard to the Assembly at its fifty-third session. The present report has been prepared in response to that request.
4. In his earlier, 1996 report, the Secretary-General described the many difficulties facing the landlocked countries of Central Asia. In particular, he observed that the impact of economic change in Central Asia had caused (a) severe economic contraction; (b) loss of markets for both raw materials and industrial products from the region; (c) a precipitous fall in real gross domestic product (GDP) which fell 30 to 50 per cent; (d) bank retrenchment, with numerous failures and a fall in savings and investment; (e) spectacular dislocation of the transport system; and (f) a dramatic rise in unemployment.

II. Economic recovery and the emerging trade and transit patterns in Central Asia

A. Economic recovery

5. Since then, the economic outlook in Central Asia has ameliorated. The countries concerned are still recovering from the dislocation of their central planning economies and grappling with the problems of transition to market-based economies but economic recovery, which in some countries began in 1994, has in general been sustained. Monetary stabilization programmes and currency controls introduced since 1992 have managed to reduce inflation, GDP is on the rise and gradual recovery in production and trade is taking place (see table 1).

Table 1
Real GDP and consumer prices
(Annual average percentage change over the previous year)

Country	GDP		Consumer prices	
	1993	1997	1993	1997
Kazakhstan	-9.2	2.0	1 660	20
Kyrgyzstan	-15.5	10.4	1 210	30
Tajikistan	-16.3	1.7	2 140	70
Turkmenistan	1.5	0.1 ^a	1 630	^b
Uzbekistan	-2.3	5.2	1 230	320 ^c

Source: UNCTAD calculations based on data from Inter-State Statistics Committee of CIS.

^a 1996.

^b Data unavailable.

^c 1995.

6. Even so, the pace of recovery has not been shared equally among countries or, for that matter, between economic sectors within individual countries. According to official Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) figures, in the three Central Asian countries where GDP fell by one half or more between 1990 and 1994 (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), economic recovery has strengthened markedly in the last two years. The pace of economic recovery in Kazakhstan in 1997 was reflected in the attainment of a 2 per cent growth of GDP, double its performance in 1996. Economic performance in Kyrgyzstan was even more robust, posting a GDP growth of about 10 per cent in 1997. Tajikistan's economy, devastated by a five-year civil war, has also bottomed out, thanks to a strong contribution from the agricultural sector which resumed production following the peace agreement in June 1997. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which witnessed more moderate declines between 1990 and 1994 have continued to make reasonable gains.

7. Although the Central Asian countries have managed to reverse their economic decline, long-term growth and sustainable development in those countries will depend on their ability to develop new industries to replace those created and sustained by the unique characteristics and artificial engineering of central planning. In the short run, they must find new markets for traditional products and new sources of raw materials and supplies to replace those disrupted by the break-up of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

8. Given the severe budgetary and balance-of-payments difficulties facing the Central Asian countries, foreign direct investment (FDI) is expected to play a major role in their development effort. Measures being taken to establish an appropriate regulatory framework for market-based economies, including trade liberalization and privatization, have stimulated FDI and increased bilateral and multilateral aid flows. The energy sector (oil and gas) and mining have claimed the lion's share of FDI and the bulk of this investment has gone to Kazakhstan (see table 2).

Table 2
Net foreign direct investment in 1992-1996

Country	Cumulative (millions of dollars)	Per head (dollars)
Kazakhstan	2 536.0	29.8
Kyrgyzstan ^a	191.1	10.2
Tajikistan ^b	41.0	2.2
Turkmenistan ^b	308.1	25.1
Uzbekistan	310.0	2.8

Sources: UNCTAD, foreign direct investment/transnational corporations (FDI/TNC) database, and IMF tape retrieved in June 1998.

^a 1993-1996

^b 1994-1996

B. The emerging trade pattern

9. The emerging trade pattern in Central Asia has been characterized by change in the direction of trade and the product mix. There has been a shift from trade in heavy industrial products, once the mainstay of Kazakhstan and some of the other Central Asian countries, to exports dominated by agriculture, metals and light industries as well as change in the direction of trade, with new markets outside the CIS area becoming important destinations for Central Asian foreign trade, especially exports (see table 3).

Table 3
Value of exports and imports
(Millions of dollars)

Country	Kind	Exports			Imports		
		1992	1996	1997	1992	1996	1997
Kazakhstan	Total	^a	6 230	6 366	^a	4 261	4 275
	Extra	1 398	2 758	3 515	469	1 297	1 969
	Intra	^a	3 472	2 851	^a	2 964	2 306
Kyrgyzstan	Total	^a	506	580	^a	838	680
	Extra	77	112	270	71	351	260
	Intra	^a	394	310	^a	487	420
Tajikistan	Total	^a	770	780	^a	668	805
	Extra	111	439	470	132	286	300
	Intra	^a	331	310	^a	382	505
Turkmenistan	Total	^a	1 693	750	^a	1 313	1 130
	Extra	908	551	270	543	924	520
	Intra	^a	1 142	480	^a	389	610

Country	Kind	Exports			Imports		
		1992	1996	1997	1992	1996	1997
Uzbekistan	Total	^a	4 211	^a	^a	4 712	^a
	Extra	869	3 321	^a	929	3 195	^a
	Intra	^a	890	^a	^a	1 517	^a

Source: Inter-State Statistical Committee of CIS.

Note: Extra: trade with countries outside CIS; intra: trade with the member countries of CIS.

^a Data unavailable.

10. Exports to foreign countries outside the CIS area were mainly cotton fibres and metals (aluminium, refined copper, zinc) while imports included both capital and consumer items. In 1996, the combined share of total exports of the export trade to the outside world from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was about 60 per cent. In contrast, total imports from non-CIS countries grew relatively more moderately, with Turkey, China, Germany and other European Union (EU) countries emerging as important trading partners.

C. Alternative transit transport routes and pipelines

11. The growing number of alternative transit routes in Central Asia has played a key role in changing the direction of trade. The impact of those routes on opening up Central Asia for trade, in spite of their present physical and non-physical constraints, has been substantial. Improving their efficiency to minimize the cost of transport will enable them to make an even greater contribution to trade expansion.

12. Central Asia's resolve to open up to trade and investment has been matched by international support, in terms of credit finance for maintenance and development of transport infrastructure and technical assistance to increase the efficiency of its transit transport systems. This new partnership has been built on confidence in Central Asia's ability to offer attractive trade and investment opportunities for investors.

13. With a territory as large as India and Pakistan combined and rich natural resources, Central Asia has enormous trade potential. Furthermore, sitting astride the centre of the Eurasian land mass, it provides a land bridge between Asia and Europe. As a landlocked region, Central Asia needs access to and from the sea passing through the territories of transit countries but its geographical position could also enable it to become an important gateway to Asia from Europe and the Middle East (see map 1).

14. Today, however, trade to or through Central Asia is hampered by prohibitive transport costs. In many cases, these represent up to 60 per cent of the value of manufactured imports. Central Asia and its trading partners therefore have a strong incentive to improve the efficiency of the main transit transport routes which not only link Central Asia with the world but also facilitate transport between Asia and Europe.

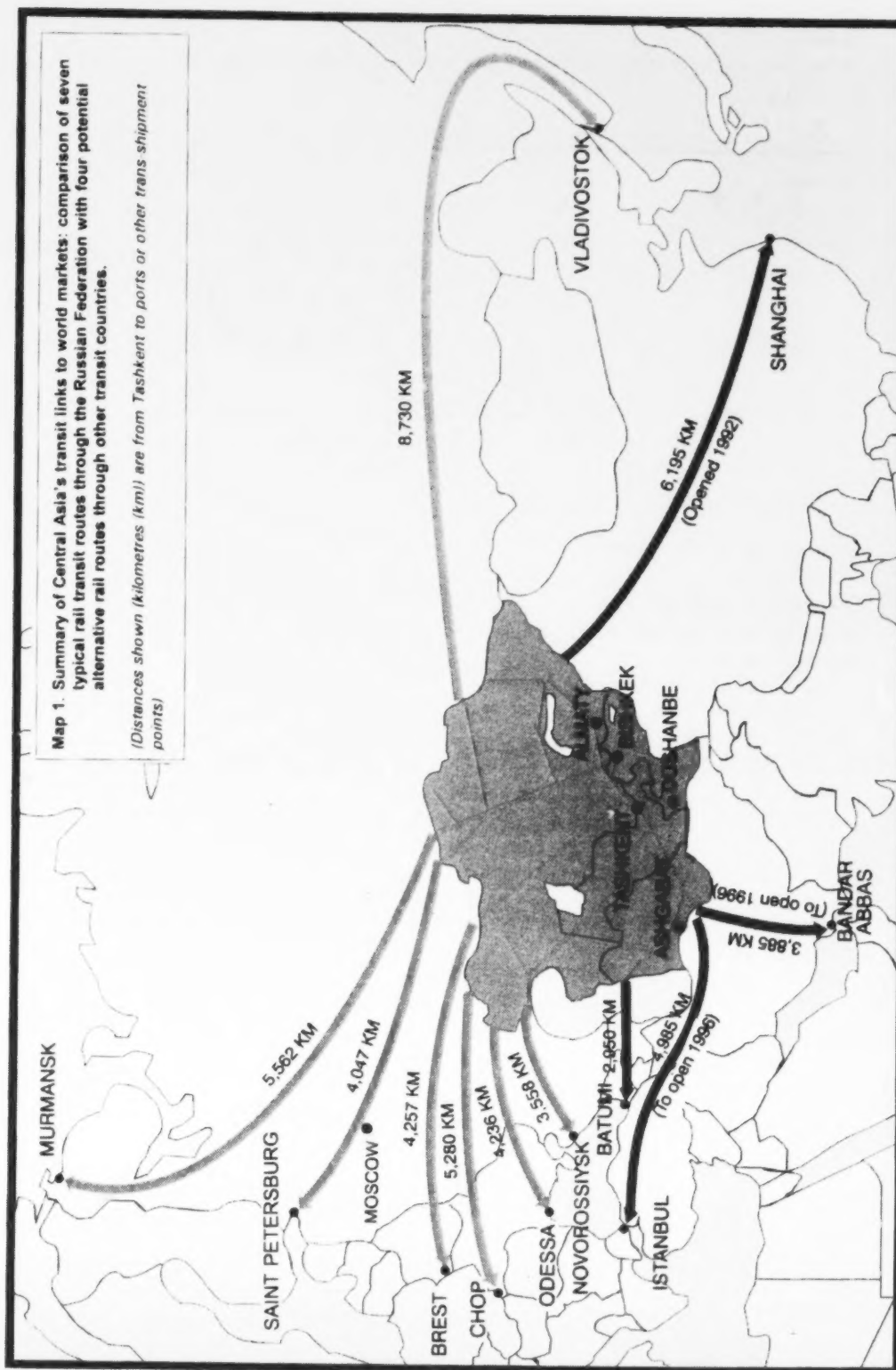


Table 4
Basic data: distance, area, population and gross national product (GNP) per capita

<i>Country</i>	<i>Distance^a (Kilometres (km))</i>	<i>Area (thousands of sq km)</i>	<i>Population^b (millions)</i>	<i>GNP per capita^c (US\$)</i>
Kazakhstan	3 750	2 717	7.2	1 680
Kyrgyzstan	3 600	199	4.6	820
Tajikistan	3 100	143	5.9	490
Turkmenistan	1 700	488	4.4	1 230
Uzbekistan	2 950	450	22.7	850
Total		3 997	54.8	

Source: UNCTAD secretariat.

^a Estimated shortest distance by surface route from each country's capital, through one or more transit countries, to the nearest port for ocean-going vessels.

^b 1994 estimates.

^c World Bank estimates for 1992.

1. New pipeline project proposals

15. Central Asia has enormous oil and gas reserves. The Caspian fields alone have been reported as holding potential reserves approaching 200 billion barrels – an amount almost as large as Saudi Arabia's total potential reserves. Kazakhstan has the world's sixth largest reserves of oil and natural gas. However, as the only outlet of oil and gas from Central Asia to the world is through the Russian pipeline network, Central Asia is actively searching for alternative pipeline routes in order to increase its exports potential to the world market (see box 1).

16. Pending the construction of alternative pipelines, oil is being moved by rail. Tengiz oil from Kazakhstan, for example, is moved by tanker across the Caspian Sea and then by rail to the port of Bat'umi in Georgia for onward transport to world markets. In 1997, 3 million tons were moved by rail. Exports are expected to rise to between 4 million and 5 million tons in 1998. Turkmenistan crude has also been shipped across the Caspian. However, since transporting oil by rail is neither cost-effective nor safe, serious commercial exploitation of Central Asia's oil and gas reserves will only begin with the construction of new pipelines.

Box 1. The prospective Caspian oil boom and the competition for transit pipeline routes

A number of pipeline projects are in the offing. A consortium called Central Asia Pipeline (Cent Gas), which is led by the United States oil and gas company Unicol, signed a contract with Turkmenistan in 1995 to build oil and gas pipelines from Turkmenistan to Pakistan through Afghanistan. However, this project has given rise to legal disputes among some of the oil firms. Moreover, the security of the pipeline in Afghanistan is in question as long as civil strife continues.

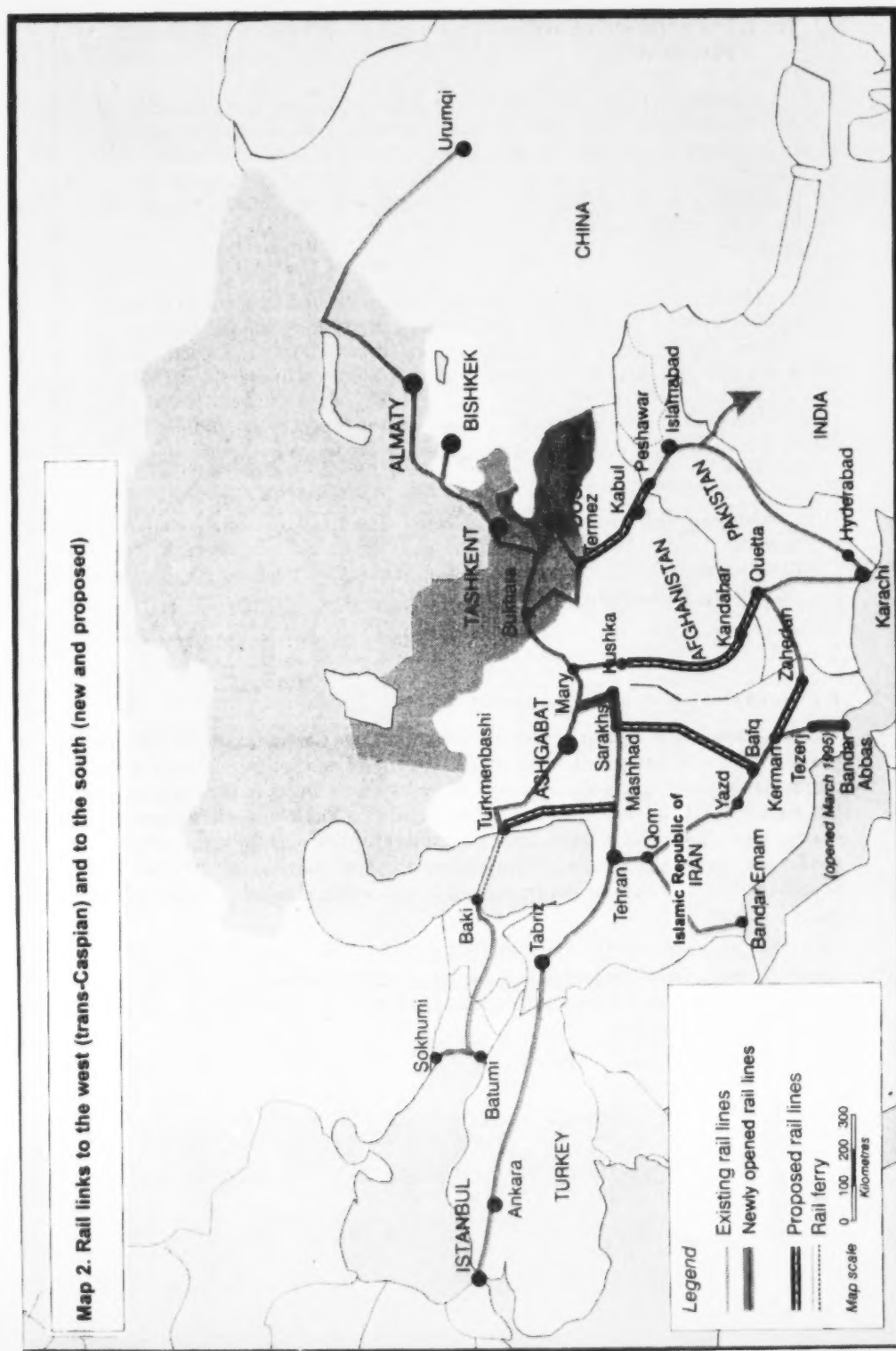
The start of construction work on the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) pipeline from the Tengiz field to the Russian port of Novorossiysk has been delayed. Construction is not likely to start in March 1998 as was expected. Work on the pipeline, which was originally to have been started by the end of 1996, will probably not start until 1999, according to oil industry sources. The key issue seems to be the failure of CPC's management to secure transit rights from the Russian Federation and regional authorities that are crucial for the pipeline project.

Other pipeline schemes include a pipeline from Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan across the Caspian Sea, the so-called Baku-Ceyhan route; a pipeline from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran; and extension of a gas pipeline from Almaty to Ürümqi.

2. Rail, road and inland water transport

17. As a result of various initiatives in recent years, the Central Asian countries have a growing number of alternative transit routes. The construction of two railway extensions, the first linking the Central Asian network to the Chinese network in 1992 and the second linking Central Asia with the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1996, made transcontinental railway services possible from the Pacific ports of China on the East to the Indian Ocean and Europe. Two-bogey change or trans-shipment, at both ends – at the Chinese border at Druzhba and the Turkmenistan border at Sarakhs – is needed because of differences in rail gauge (see map 2).

18. The construction of the Bafgh-Mashad railway in the Islamic Republic of Iran will reduce the distance from Turkmenistan to the seaport of Bandar-e Abbās by 1,600 km. The construction of a railway from Kermān to Zāhedān in the Islamic Republic of Iran will link Central Asia with Pakistan.



19. However, in spite of the cost advantage for low-value bulk commodity transports over long distances, rail transport in Central Asia entered a period of decline beginning in 1991. The break-up of the former Soviet railway system and the creation of separate national railways affected the efficiency of railway services in the whole region.

20. In the wake of these problems, road transport competition has increased. However, the rise of international road services has brought new problems, notably accelerated road damage, traffic accidents, pollution and tax evasion.

(a) Rail and road links through the Russian Federation

21. The existence of three alternative railway lines passing through Kazakhstan towards Moscow, the Baltic region and Western Europe makes rail transport the most convenient means of transport in the east-west direction from Central Asia (see map 3).

22. However, a variety of factors, including high tariffs, inefficient railway operations and changing trade patterns and requirements, have enabled road transport to capture an increasing share of the freight market. The east-west routes through the Russian Federation carry transit trade from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and parts of Uzbekistan. The road network is fairly well developed. However, it was built to withstand much lower axle loads and gross vehicle weights than those of the heavy-duty vehicles that now ply the roads. As a result, the rise of international road services has been accompanied by rapid deterioration of the road network.

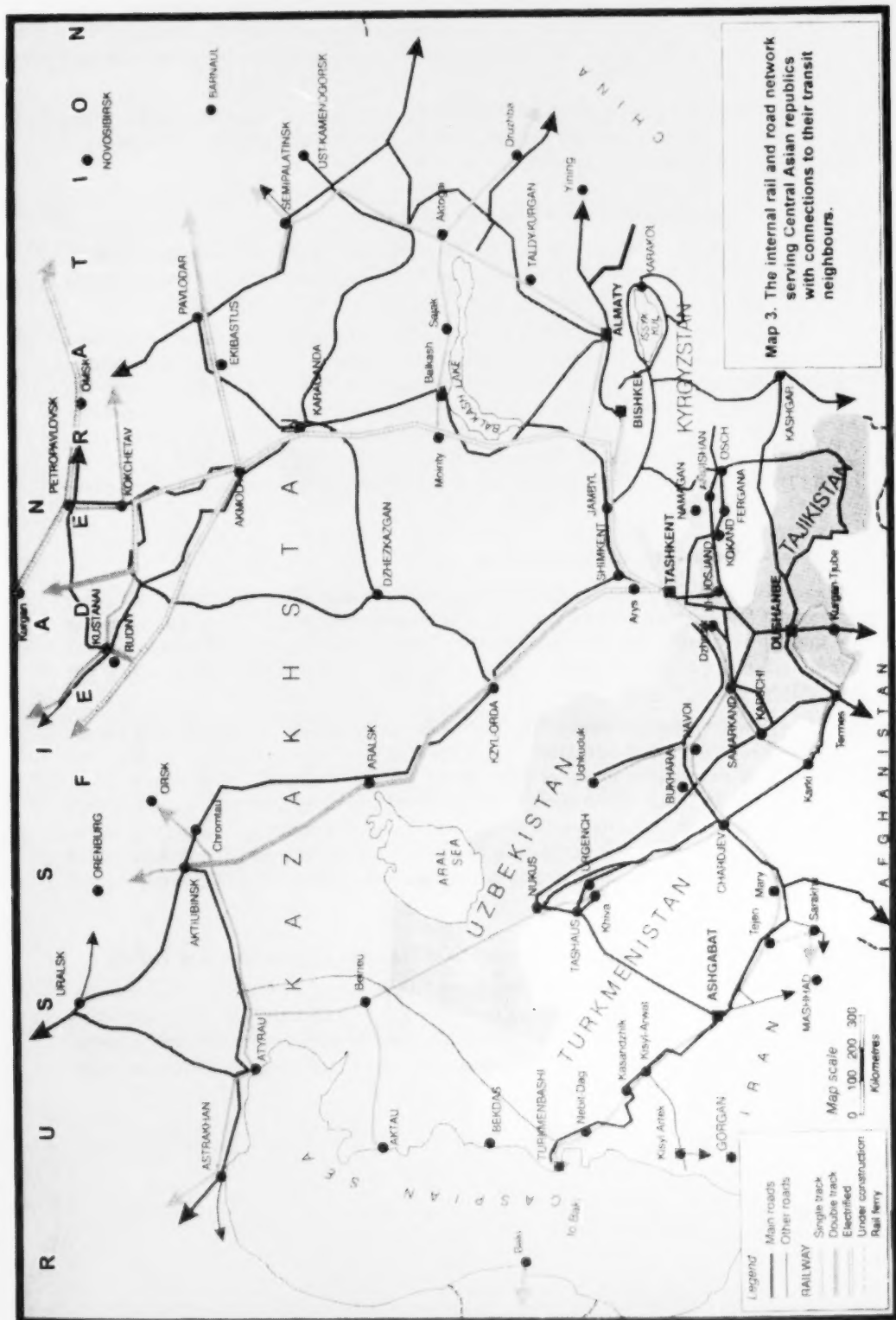
(b) Trans-Caspian route by rail and road

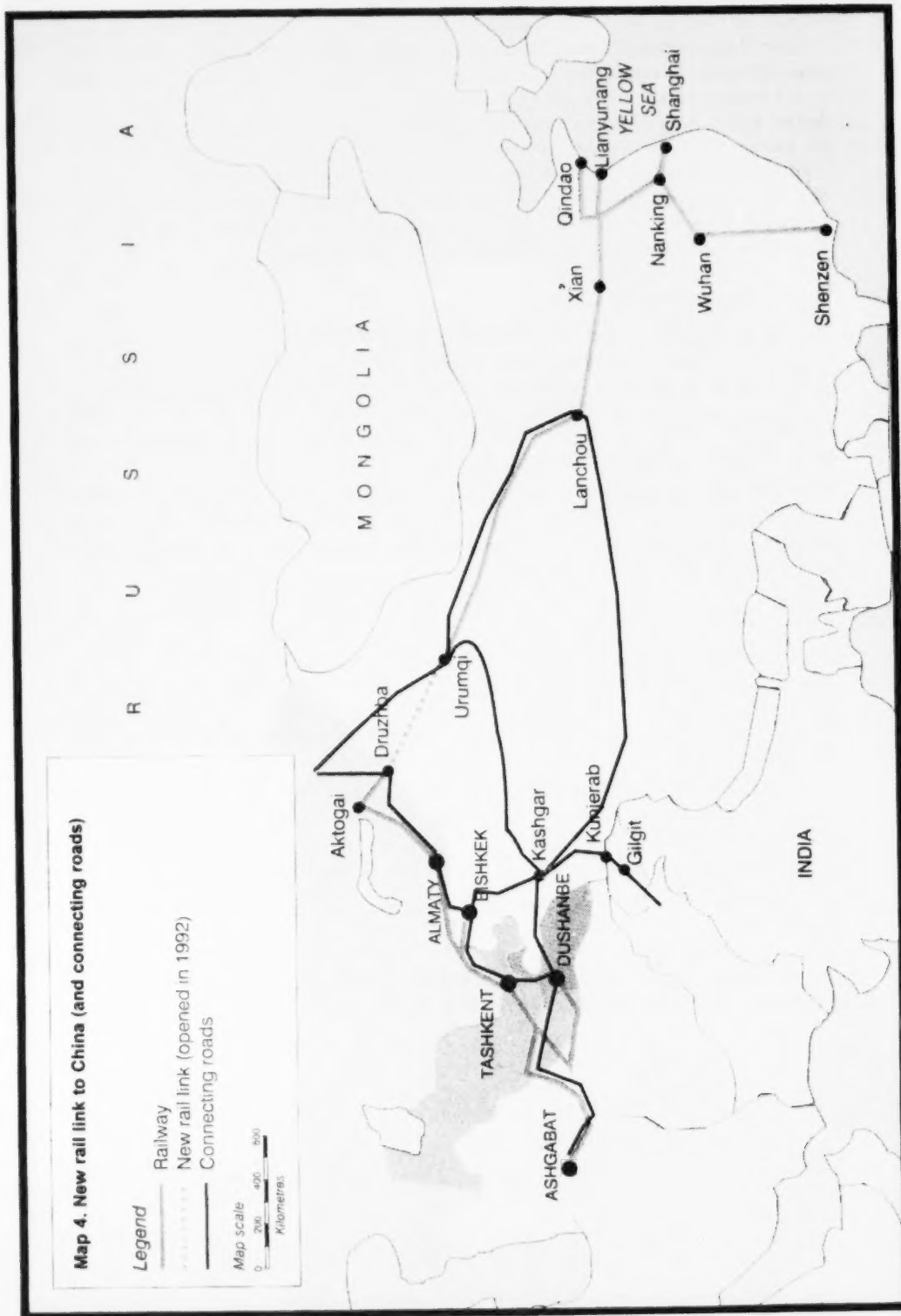
23. The trans-Caspian route by rail or road provides the shortest link to an ocean-going seaport from Central Asia (see map 2). The route passes through Turkmenistan to the Caspian Sea port of Türkmenbashi (formerly Krasnovodsk), then by rail ferry to the port of Baku in Azerbaijan, and finally by rail or road to the Black Sea ports of Bat'umi or P'ot'i in Georgia.

24. However, transport costs on this intermodal transport route are high and services are unreliable. Ferry services across the Caspian Sea are inefficient and are not scheduled. This results in long waiting times for rail wagons, and road vehicles; intermittent political hostilities in the Caucasus also discourage transporters from using this route. About 3 million tons per year of mainly crude oil were shipped through the ports of Baku and Bat'umi in 1997 compared with a flow of 5 million tons prior to 1991. Because of limitations on this route, a south-north route up the eastern side of the Caspian Sea has recently been developed (see map 3).

(c) Rail and road link to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Persian Gulf and Turkey

25. The completion of the rail link between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkmenistan in May 1996 was called a historic event by the press, which heralded it as the rebirth of the century-old silk road that had once linked Europe and the Persian Gulf to China. With the completion of the rail link, an additional alternative route by train between Europe and Asia has also been provided (see map 4).





26. However, because of rail gauge differences, international train services are subject to interruption at the borders between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkmenistan and between Kazakhstan and China. Trans-shipment or bogey change at the border stations takes four or more hours. Traffic from Central Asian countries proceeding to Turkey faces another physical bottleneck – the 96 km rail ferry crossing of Lake Van in eastern Turkey. Two ferries able to carry 16 railway wagons each make three round trips per day – with a total annual capacity of 500,000 to 600,000 tons. A 250 km railway bypass in mountainous terrain around the northern side of the lake, which could increase capacity to 4 million tons of goods per year, is under consideration. The delays associated with trans-shipment and ferry connections boost road transport competition which could offer an even stiffer challenge if transit transport procedures were simplified and harmonized.

(d) Rail and road link to China

27. Container traffic on the rail line linking Kazakhstan (Druzhba) to China (Ürümqi) has increased from a few dozen twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) in 1992, when the line was commissioned, to more than 3,000 TEUs in 1997. Trans-shipment or bogey change at the interchange station due to gauge differences causes considerable delays. Current plans under consideration include the enlargement of the Druzhba terminal and improvement of the rail tracks between Aktogay and Druzhba (see map 2).

28. The main east-west highway linking Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Almaty (Kazakhstan) and proceeding onward to the Kazakhstan-Chinese border at Horgos and Ürümqi needs upgrading on many sections. Some sections in China have been upgraded but many others are still in poor condition.

(e) Other rail and road links

29. One important project under way include the rail link between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. The gap between Zāhedān and Kermān within the Islamic Republic of Iran is being closed up. When work under way is completed, rail services will be available from Central Asia to Karachi, via the Islamic Republic of Iran, with an additional gauge change (see map 2).

30. The road link from Dushanbe in Tajikistan via Termez in Uzbekistan to Afghanistan via Kabul with a spur to Kandarha or Peshawar in Pakistan and onward to Karachi is one of the shortest routes from the Indian Ocean to the southern part of Central Asia. However, the current civil strife in Afghanistan inhibits normal transit transport operations.

31. The improving of the transport network between Central Asia and China led the three neighbouring countries of China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to sign an agreement in April 1997 to upgrade the road linking Tashkent in Uzbekistan with Kashgar in China via the city of Osh in Kyrgyzstan. The road links up with the Karakorum highway which connects Central Asia with China to the east and Pakistan and India to the south.

III. Measures under way to improve the efficiency of transit transport in Central Asia

32. The Central Asian countries have, since attaining their independence in 1991, taken measures to join the community of nations by becoming Members of the United Nations and related agencies and affiliating themselves to a number of organizations in their region.

33. Membership in international and regional organizations and acceptance of basic international agreements and norms have provided the Central Asian countries with benefits in terms of expanded trade and investment opportunities. The General Assembly and organizations of the United Nations system, notably UNDP, ESCAP, ECE and UNCTAD, have offered technical assistance in a broad range of sectors and played an important role in mobilizing financial support from the international community. The Bretton Woods institutions, as well as regional banks, notably the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Asian Development Bank, have extended credit dedicated to improving existing transport infrastructure and developing alternative transport routes. Individual donor countries, notably Japan, China and the United States of America, as well as groups of countries like EU, have also provided significant financial and technical assistance support (see box 2).

Box 2. Selected sample of major projects to improve the efficiency of transit transport

Japan

- Construction of new airport at Akmola, Kazakhstan: loan from Japan \$180 million
- Construction of coach workshop in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, by Japan ¥6,102 billion (yen)
- Three local airport modernization projects: loan from Japan ¥15,526 billion
- Modernization of Manas international airport in Kyrgyzstan ¥5,454 billion

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

- Transport infrastructure modernization in Turkmenistan: loan from EBRD \$50 million
- Development of Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan: loan from EBRD \$30 million
- Rehabilitation of port of Aktau Kazakiha \$54 million
- Rehabilitation of Almaty-Karaganda-Akmola \$52 million

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- Rehabilitation of road from Fulshad to Aksytau within the Almaty-Akmola corridor by ADB \$50 million
- Rehabilitation of 135 km on the Bishkek-Osh road in Kyrgyzstan by ADB \$50 million

Transport Corridor-Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) projects proposals 1998-1999

- Road infrastructure in Central Asia ECU^a 250,000
- Feasibility study to identify improvement of the ports of P'ot'i and Bat'umi ECU 15 million
- Central Asian rail development ECU 11 million
- Transportation equipment leasing company, and regionalized facilities ECU 800,000
- Caspian Sea traffic, and ports
 - New Caspian Sea shipping line(s) ECU 200,000
 - Rehabilitation of the ferry terminal for services to Baku ECU 250,000
 - Navigation channel for Turkmenbashi port ECU 100,000

• Traffic forecasting: previous TRACECA	ECU 700,000
• Roads maintenance	
• Training centres	ECU 2 million
• Roads maintenance planning	ECU 500,000
• Ports managements support and training	ECU 1 million
• Chardzev bridge	ECU 500,000
• Feasibility study of links between TRACECA and China	ECU 600,000
• Intergovernmental joint commission for implementation of a multilateral agreement	ECU 11 million
• International road transport transit facilitation	
• Operator training and international road transport transit facilitation	ECU 25 million
• Supply of computer equipment for SAFETIR (Safe TIR Convention) operation	ECU 500,000
• Investment in Aktau port	ECU 2 million
• Intermodal/terminal equipment	ECU 25 million
• International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA) freight forwarders training centres	ECU 2 million
• Rail tank wagon cleaning boilers, Baku	ECU 5 million
UNDP projects	
• Central Asian External and Transit Transport Initiative: rebuilding the silk road	\$450,000
• Silk Road Area Development Programme (SRADP)	\$300,000
* European currency units.	

A. Measures designed to overcome physical infrastructure bottlenecks

34. With the main transit transport routes for Central Asia virtually in place, the second phase of development has focused on rehabilitation, maintenance and upgrading. With regard to railway infrastructure, priority attention is being directed to improvement of bogey change stations, upgrading and reconstruction of tracks and bridges, and electrification.

35. Road maintenance and rehabilitation to prevent accelerated deterioration of the road condition are being given greater priority over construction of new roads. The fact that poor road conditions have led to a chain of negative effects, in terms of accelerated wear and tear of vehicles, frequent breakdown of motor vehicles resulting in late deliveries and increased transport costs, deserves urgent attention. Several projects are under way to rehabilitate the highway between the main cities of Central Asia (see box 2). Major undertakings include the Almaty-Karaganda-Astana-Borovoye project which is expected to be completed by the year 2000.

B. Measures designed to overcome non-physical barriers

36. The negative impact of physical constraints on rail, road and inland water transport has been compounded by non-physical barriers. It is increasingly being recognized that the greatest returns in terms of increased efficiency and lowered costs of transport in Central

Asia are likely to come about from determined efforts to improve the operational, institutional and regulatory environment of transit operations.

1. Measures designed to improve transport operations

(a) Railway transport operations

37. Railways in Central Asia are going through a difficult period of adjustment. Not only are they in the midst of a process of consolidation following the break-up of the former central Soviet railway system but they have also to compete with established foreign international road carriers.

38. Railway operations in Central Asia have received support from the Council on Railway Transport of CIS and the Organization for Cooperation between Railways (OSZhD). The Council coordinates railway services within the CIS area and between CIS and third countries. OSZhD supervises the application of the Agreement on International Rail Transport of Goods (SMGS) which facilitates the harmonization of tariffs and documentation. Recently, the Islamic Republic of Iran agreed to join OSZhD.

39. Although the Council and OSZhD have made commendable efforts to facilitate inter-railway cooperation, railways operations have continued to suffer from many problems, notably falling freight volumes and revenues, difficulties related to late return of wagons back to home lines, and settlement of balances which have now to be paid in hard currency.

40. The future of railways lies in close cooperation and improvement of the quality of services. In order for railways to compete with road transport, existing inter-railway agreements will need to be strengthened to enable them to offer seamless services across national borders. In this context, railway administrations, among other things, should consider offering multimodal transport services. As the role of the private sector in trade transactions increases, railways in Central Asia will be expected to be more sensitive to customer needs and requirements including prompt settlement of claims and payment of fair compensation in cases of loss, damage or delay of goods in transit.

(b) Road transport operations

41. The road transport industry in Central Asia, like its railways competitor, is also in the process of adjustment. Privatization of State-owned road transport corporations and programmes, introduced in some countries to turn some of these corporations into providers of international road services, is incomplete. Meanwhile, international road transport services are dominated by foreign carriers. In reaction to this, some countries have imposed restrictions on carriage of strategic cargoes, such as cotton, by foreign carriers, thereby making it difficult for them to obtain return loads; but Central Asian road carriers venturing abroad fail in their turn, for lack of international agency networks, to obtain return loads. The result is empty vehicles travelling in both directions, and this adds to transport costs.

42. There is a case to be made for allowing foreign carriers to pick strategic cargoes, inasmuch as this would lower outward freight charges. However, it is fair to expect that, in return, measures would be taken to support local transport firms. One way to do this would be through establishing joint ventures with foreign firms, thereby improving the performance of local firms by making available to them capital and management skills. It is increasingly recognized that a fair and stable regulatory environment would stimulate the development of smooth, economic and efficient transit transport services in Central Asia.

2. Legal and administrative measures designed to facilitate transit transport

43. Several international conventions provide a valuable basis for tackling various problems related to transit traffic operations. The Central Asian countries have acceded to some of these international legal instruments and continue to examine the possibility of acceding to many more. The Central Asian countries have also signed regional and bilateral agreements designed to harmonize their transport legislation and procedures.

44. However, given the multiplicity and complexity of transit issues, a fair and stable regulatory environment would require much greater efforts to harmonize and simplify the broad range of institutional, procedural, documentary and regulatory factors of vital importance to the actual movements of goods. This calls for accession by countries to a wide range of international conventions and the conclusion of regional and bilateral agreements.

45. At present, many difficulties stand in the way of transit transport operations in Central Asia. Lack of a common regulatory framework with harmonized transport laws and regulations in the subregion forces transporters to adjust to different laws and regulations in each country of transit, thereby creating many difficulties and resulting in fines and delays.

46. Slow border procedures, with up to four days of waiting in each direction, are not uncommon. One problem is that insofar as internal CIS border facilities were not designed for current levels of traffic, separate lanes do not exist to direct different streams of traffic for processing; as a result, even empty vehicles take the same amount of time to pass the borders (see paper on non-physical barriers to transport development (document TRANS/SC.1/1998/8-TRANS/WP.30/1998/10) presented by Antony Bailey, International Road Federation (IRF) member, to the IRF Road Conference held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, in April 1998).

47. Customs procedures are cumbersome. Transporters are normally required to present complete sets of documentation in two languages at each border crossing. This is often accompanied by the breaking of seals and customs escort across the territory of each country of transit. Transit charges, especially for foreign transporters, are high and charges can change abruptly without warning. To add to these difficulties, European insurance companies normally refused to insure goods bound for Central Asia because the countries therein have not acceded to relevant international conventions, such as the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR), 1956.^a

48. Transit transport cannot occur efficiently without establishing a predictable and conducive legal environment. The experience of countries that have taken joint measures to harmonize their transport policies, and to adopt common technical standards and legal instruments, has shown a significant overall reduction in transport costs. The Central Asian countries have welcomed recent initiatives designed to align their transit trade laws and procedures with international principles and norms. Initiatives by UNDP/UNCTAD, the Transport Corridor-Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) propose to establish a regulatory framework designed to underpin transit transport operation in Central Asia. The common features of these initiatives are outlined in box 3 below.

Box 3. Some possible elements of a transit transport framework agreement between Central Asian countries and their transit transport neighbours

A transit transport framework agreement might include (a) provisions for freedom of transit, including non-discrimination against goods of any origin or destination, avoidance of unnecessary delays and exemption from any charges other than those required to meet the administrative costs of transit; (b) designation of transit transport corridors, including rail, road and inland waterways, also including provision of adequate frontier facilities and services (terminals, border-crossing points, gauge interchange stations, ferry link ports and navigational aids) and further including measures to expedite clearance of traffic, ensure the safety of traffic in transit, permit transport companies to establish offices in transit countries and obtain multiple visa entry; (c) maritime ports and facilities to be provided for the use of transit traffic; (d) general conditions for road transport, including the use of appropriate traffic regulations, freedom to select the best means of transport, requirements for approval of any carriage of internal traffic as long as necessary, provisions regarding road transport permits, technical requirements for vehicles, provision of fuel and lubricants, mutual recognition of driving permits and certificates of roadworthiness, motor vehicle third-party insurance provisions, and requirement of the equal treatment of national and transit companies regarding charges and financial obligations; (e) general conditions for rail transport, including designated interchange stations at borders and arrangements for technical inspections; (f) general conditions for inland water transport including navigation aids, maximum loads, ship papers, vessel registration and certificates of seaworthiness; (g) contract of carriage of goods in transit, including consignment notes, passenger tickets, luggage registration, liability for loss or damage to luggage, compensation for loss of goods, combined responsibility of carriers, and compensation for injury or death; (h) customs control, including minimizing controls, joint inspections, and establishment of a customs transit system; (i) documentation and procedures, including limit on number of documents and alignment and harmonization with international standards; (j) miscellaneous provisions, including a "Transit transport coordination council" with decision authority over disputes and authority to propose amendments to the agreement, and arrangements for the arbitration of disputes.

3. Institutional support arrangements and human resources development

49. Institutional support arrangements and human resource development are critical in improving the efficiency of transit transport. Effective regional transit cooperation often requires new attitudes and structures. Managing change demands proper organization and sustained commitment to carrying out agreed reforms and commitments. Full-scale effort to reform regulatory, procedural and managerial systems at a regional or subregional level requires effective institutional support arrangements and trained manpower at both the government and private sector levels.

(a) Role of Governments

50. Even as many Governments retreat from commercial transport operations, they still retain the critical role of financing physical transport infrastructure, and maintaining and managing such infrastructure, as well as formulating and enforcing transport regulations. The management and control of transit traffic, constituting a cross-sectoral issue, cut across the responsibilities of various government departments. The police are involved in enforcing traffic regulations for all vehicles, including foreign vehicles in transit. Goods and means of transport cross national territories under customs control. Construction and maintenance of physical infrastructure and transit facilities fall under the responsibility of one or more ministries. Visa formalities may be carried out by yet another ministry and the ministry of foreign affairs also has a role to play.

51. Although there is greater awareness that regular and structured inter-ministerial consultations are needed to enhance the ability of Governments to formulate sound transit transport policies, in practice the ministries responsible for transport do not always undertake adequate consultations before taking major decisions that impinge on transit transport. It should be underlined that regular and structured inter-ministerial consultations will enhance Governments' ability to implement their transit transport policies and commitments.

(b) Role of the private sector

52. The changing structure of transport and trade in Central Asia has increased the role of the private sector. As provider or user of transport services, the private sector has first-hand knowledge of the bottlenecks and obstacles encountered in day-to-day operations and, as such, is usually best suited to proposing viable and practical solutions. The private sector has a major stake in seeing to it that transit transport facilitation succeeds because the sector is a direct beneficiary of the measures designed to harmonize inter-State regulations and simplify administrative and customs procedures. The participation of the private sector in policy formulation will not only facilitate the adoption of suitable measures but will also secure the sector's cooperation in implementing new measures adopted in intergovernmental decisions.

(c) Role of human resources development

53. Solutions to many of the transit transport problems require improvements in knowledge and skills of those involved in policy-making and those involved at the operational level. There is therefore an obvious need to involve human resource development activities in any transit transport facilitation programme. The need is greater in the economies in transition because changes being proposed are not always well understood by people who have been used to a different economic system.

54. Governments will become more responsive to the problems of transit transport, and will be more likely to establish and implement appropriate regulations, if they are provided with data and information that clearly demonstrate the nature of the problems involved and the benefits of implementing appropriate regulations. This type of information would be disseminated through documentation, formal seminars and other suitable educational channels.

55. At the managerial and operational levels, actual implementation of trade and transport facilitation measures would require training, especially since many of the measures require the application of new and constantly changing technologies. This applies particularly to the areas of customs, clearing and forwarding, banking and insurance, and cargo information systems. Given the linkages between these functions at the operational level, a sound training

programme would need to ensure that there is coordination among different sectors regarding the content of training. The United Nations, in particular UNDP/UNCTAD, ECE and ESCAP, is playing, and will continue to play, an important role in technical assistance delivery to Central Asia.

Notes

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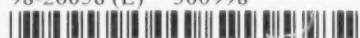
United Nations Decade of International Law: draft guiding principles for international negotiations

Draft guiding principles for international negotiations

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	2
II. Comments and proposals received from States	2
Kyrgyzstan	2
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	2
Mongolia	2
Qatar	3



I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 52/155 of 15 December 1997 entitled "Draft guiding principles for international negotiations", in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to transmit comments and proposals on the draft guiding principles for international negotiations contained in document A/52/141.

2. By a note verbale dated 6 February 1998, the Secretary-General drew the attention of all States to General Assembly resolution 52/155 and invited them to submit, pursuant to paragraph 4 of the resolution and by 1 August 1998, any comments and proposals which they might consider appropriate.

3. As at 3 August 1998, information in response to the above-mentioned note has been received from the Governments of Kyrgyzstan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mongolia and Qatar.

II. Comments and proposals received from States

Kyrgyzstan

[Original: English]
[6 May 1998]

The Kyrgyz Republic welcomes the opportunity to consider the question of draft guiding principles for international negotiations in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/155. In addition, the Kyrgyz Republic considers that international negotiations play an increasingly significant role in the management of international relations, that they are important and that they constitute the most widely used means for promoting bilateral and multilateral cooperation between States. It also expresses the belief that the development of principles for international negotiations is important for successful and predictable negotiations and is in full conformity with the objectives of the United Nations Decade of International Law. Furthermore, the Kyrgyz Republic looks forward to a businesslike and fruitful consideration of the issue and expresses the hope that these principles would be agreed upon and adopted by the General Assembly in 1999 during the year of celebration of the centennial of the first International Peace Conference of 1899.

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

[Original: Arabic]
[10 June 1998]

1. We should like to state that the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya considers that the draft guiding principles for international negotiations accord with the general principles of international law and, in particular, with the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties and that they would safeguard the legitimate rights of small States in negotiations at both the bilateral and multilateral levels.

2. Accordingly, the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya supports the approval and adoption of the draft guiding principles, which would promote and further develop the norms of international law.

Mongolia

[Original: English]
[17 March 1998]

1. The position of the Government of Mongolia on the question of drafting guiding principles for international negotiations is reflected in document A/52/141. Mongolia believes that international negotiations are the most flexible and effective means of cooperation of States in managing international relations, settling disputes by peaceful means and creating international norms of conduct of States, the role of which will definitely increase in the future.

2. It is generally recognized and accepted that international negotiations are conducted on the basis of the principles of contemporary international law. The international community has underlined the important role that constructive and effective negotiations can play in attaining the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations by contributing to the management of international relations, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the creation of new international norms of conduct of States. However, lack of clear rules concerning the conduct of negotiations gives rise to or provides room for different interpretations of even such generally recognized principles as the sovereign equality of States, non-discrimination, non-interference, negotiation in good faith, cooperation of States, the non-use of force and so on. The consideration of the item in the Legal (Sixth) Committee¹ during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations has demonstrated that there is widespread support for identifying and harmonizing the set of principles to guide States in the conduct of international negotiations that would offer a frame of reference for negotiations and contribute to enhancing the predictability of negotiating parties, reduce uncertainty and promote an atmosphere of trust at negotiations.

3. The consideration of the item, including the content and the drafting of the principles, has been based on the draft principles presented by Mongolia (see A/52/141, annex II).

Though some delegates have proposed that the Mongolian draft be revised on the basis of comments and suggestions made during the consideration of the item in the Committee and its Working Group, Mongolia believes that such a revision should be made once written comments and proposals have been made available and discussed at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. The consideration of the item during the last session has also shown the effectiveness of consideration of this item when examined without politicizing the issues.

4. During the consideration of the draft principles in the Legal (Sixth) Committee, two questions of principle had been raised that, it seems, need some clarification, namely (a) whether freedom of choice of means in the peaceful settlement of disputes would be affected by the adoption of these guiding principles for international negotiations; and (b) what is actually meant by the duty of States to adhere strictly to the agreed principles and rules of conducting given negotiations, reflected in draft principle (h) of the draft contained in annex II of document A/52/141.

5. Freedom of choice of means is one of the main principles of peaceful settlement of disputes, as reflected in the Charter of the United Nations, the Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes² and other relevant international documents. Its utility is confirmed daily by international practice. However, peaceful settlement of disputes is not the only function of international negotiations. The application of international negotiations is much broader; they are the main tool of international cooperation, managing international relations and creating the new norms of conduct of States. Therefore, in the context of the guiding principles of international negotiations, the role of negotiations, as flexible and effective means of peaceful settlement of disputes, should be confined to the duty of States to negotiate meaningfully, in order to arrive at an early settlement acceptable to the parties.

6. The duty of States to adhere strictly to the agreed principles and rules of conducting given negotiations is an important principle that should be reflected in the body of guiding principles. Given the fact that each international negotiation has its specific goal and traits, this principle identifies them so as to enable the parties to be focused on them when negotiating. Thus, for example, in many disarmament negotiations the principle of equal and undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments is essential. At the negotiations on the Cyprus question, the main political aim, it seems, is to arrive at a settlement based on a single, bizonal, bicomunal Cyprus State. In the Madrid and Oslo negotiations on the Middle East settlement, the main political principle was peace for land. Moreover, the agreed principles and rules of given negotiations could

set clearly the aim of negotiations, the framework for addressing the issues, the order of their consideration and so forth, in other words agreeing on the terms of negotiations without prejudging their outcome.

7. One of the questions to be addressed at the forthcoming discussion of the draft principles is sovereign equality of the parties to international negotiations on the one hand, and marked disparity of power of the parties to negotiations on the other. Though it is not a purely legal issue, nevertheless it has practical implications.

Qatar

[Original: Arabic]
[13 April 1998]

1. The concept of having recourse to force must be abandoned and efforts must be made to achieve the settlement of international disputes through negotiations. Such negotiations will not, however, be equitable unless the principle of the sovereign equality of all States is observed.

2. The conduct of international negotiations has not been as exhaustively studied and codified by educational and professional institutions as have other aspects of diplomatic relations. It is now clear that increased efforts must be made to identify guiding principles in a code of conduct.

3. States have a duty to negotiate in good faith. This does not mean that any party should abandon a legitimate demand, but only that it should not abandon negotiations without justification and that it should refrain from any action that might jeopardize a proposed agreement when it has entered into negotiations for the purpose of concluding an agreement.

4. The principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations must be fully observed during the course of negotiations.

5. States must not create obstacles to the conduct of negotiations by insisting on the imposition of irrelevant preconditions for the initiation or continuation of negotiations.

6. With regard to negotiations conducted between States and international organizations with a view to the provision of humanitarian assistance, such negotiations should not be prolonged unnecessarily and priority should be given to enabling the assistance to reach recipients with all possible speed.

Notes

¹ A/52/647 and A/C.6/52/SR.8-10, 30 and 31.

² General Assembly resolution 37/10, annex.



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Draft guiding principles for international negotiations

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
II. Comments and proposals received from States	2
Mexico	2



II. Comments and proposals received from States

Mexico

[4 September 1998]

[Original: Spanish]

1. Mexico expresses its appreciation to the Government of Mongolia for the proposal it has presented. The task of gathering into one single instrument the principles of international law that are applicable to one of the mechanisms that is most widely used by States in settling their differences is undoubtedly a complex one.
 2. The principles of international law that are applicable to the peaceful settlement of disputes and, consequently, to negotiations, are well established in international law. The Charter of the United Nations, as well as several declarations of the General Assembly, among other instruments, have developed these principles in an exhaustive and satisfactory manner. In principle, there does not appear to be a practical need for an exercise geared only towards one particular mechanism, which could entail some risks.
 3. Negotiation is the best mechanism there is for the settlement of disputes. Because of its dynamic nature and flexibility, it has become in effect a sort of "prerequisite" for recourse to other means. At some point in any dispute there are bound to be negotiations. Mexico considers that if the exercise of compiling principles is undertaken, the special nature of this means should be recognized, and the exercise should not have the effect, either directly or indirectly, of imposing limits on it.
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